

**HISTORICAL PROCESS AND THE CONSTITUTION OF SUBJECTS:**

**I.D. DU PLESSIS AND THE REINVENTION OF THE "MALAY"**

by

**M. SHAMIEL JEPPIE**

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## INTRODUCTION

**"THEY CANNOT REPRESENT THEMSELVES THEY MUST BE REPRESENTED"**

- Karl Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how a ruling-class actor attempted to reinvent and reconstitute an ethnic subject.

Dr I.D. Du Plessis was, among other things, an Afrikaner litterateur and Commissioner of Coloured Affairs between 1930 and 1962, the period covered by this thesis. In Cape Town he applied himself to "preserve" what was known as "the malays". Although having an historical presence in Cape Town, defining the "malays" was always a problem as their very basis was in the process of being eroded as industrialisation forced social and communal changes. But the specificity of the "malays" was not an ethnic specificity with a rigid system of control and leadership, and staunchly cast against other sets of "identities" (such as Indians or "coloureds"). As chapter one shows, Du Plessis initiated the project at a conjuncture when the existence of ethnic units was presumed and the efforts to "preserve" them were profoundly political. A background to his ideological location is also discussed. From his particular location he journeyed amongst the "malays" and attempted to reinvent them as a specific ethnic unit fixed in space and time. Chapter two presents Du Plessis' model of "malay ethnicity" and its roots in history.

The Du Plessis mission illustrates what Ranger and Hobsbawm have described as the "invention of tradition".<sup>1</sup> Thus the

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frequent references to "invention", "tradition" and rough equivalents such as "creation" and "custom" in the thesis. In chapter three Du Plessis' concrete labour to reinvent the "malays" is considered. This chapter spans the time between the establishment of the Cape Malay Choir Board in 1939 and the end of Du Plessis' career as Commissioner in 1962. From moving among the "malays" he moved to become a bureaucrat. In his new office he had to spread his energies more widely, yet the "malays" continued to occupy a specific place on the agenda of the Coloured Affairs Department. Chapter four argues that the Department complemented the Department of Native Affairs and functioned as a complex agency for social control. To maintain ruling-class dominance, control over the dominated is vital, but it is constructed as good for the entire society. Forms and institutions of social control cover a wide range and may even contradict each other. But the central contradiction lies between the controlling forces and the spontaneous and organized force of the dominated. It is argued that Du Plessis found himself creating tradition and instituting social control. But Du Plessis was not alone in creating tradition. By the early 1950s' international and local forces were shaping new destinies (and creating radical, alternative traditions). In opposition to Du Plessis' malay construction emerged a politically defined Islamic position at the same time as popular-democratic forces were confronting ruling-class forces and definitions of reality. Chapter five examines the response from Du Plessis' malay people to being socially categorised as "malay."

The relevance of this thesis lies in its attempt to "deinvent" the malays, to use the term employed by Robert Ross.<sup>2</sup> Du Plessis was but one ruling-class manufacturer of tradition and "ethnicity." Further research may explain the role of ruling-class actors, such as Senator De Roubaix (Cape Senate - late 19th century) who "observed" the Muslims, attempted to "protect" them but ultimately acted against their "interests."<sup>3</sup> In Southern Africa much of this de inventing has still to be undertaken, in scholarly terms alone. The concrete "unlearning" and de inventing of phenomena as "natural" as ethnic units is another issue. Patrick Harries' work on the Tsonga and the work by anthropologists John Sharp and Robert Thornton also point to this direction.<sup>4</sup> Another issue raised here, though only obliquely, is the dearth of studies on State bureaucracies and the State-bureaucracy-Capital relationship. On the Coloured Affairs Department, for instance, hardly any, if any sustained research and analysis is in progress. The recent work on the Native Affairs Department, though incomplete, points to an area for serious research.<sup>5</sup> An issue that is not raised in this thesis but may be a subject for further research is that of gender relations and contradictions in the reproduction of social relations. Implicit in Du Plessis' work is the conception of a masculine "malay community", with the women only functional in household roles. But even if women were socially limited their functions extended beyond cooking to vital areas, including household production, generating extra income, "policing" morality and education. This awaits research.

Theoretically, the thesis draws on a discourse-theoretical

approach.<sup>6</sup> This approach, broadly advances the argument that ideology has determinative value and is not simply a set of illusions about reality. Althusser has argued that ideology is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world. Ideology interpellates or hails subjects, giving them a defined social role in a defined social context. Althusser has described this process of interpellation thus:

Ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among individuals ( it recruits them all), or transforms the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation that I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most common everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!"..."<sup>7</sup>

Ideology is "produced" in/through Ideological State Apparatuses but the ideological instance in a social formation is overdetermined by the economic instance, in the final analysis. Discourse analysis argues against reducing ideology to a determination by the economic instance, even in the last instance. Ideology is inscribed in discourse, and discourses do not occupy a certain level in the social formation but are coextensive with society itself. In fact society is constituted within language and discourse. Ideology thus has no necessary class belonging. In other words an ideology is not inherently proletarian or bourgeois. And since discourses are coextensive with social reality itself all social relations are discursive by nature. In social and political existence and struggle discourses constitute subjects, and hegemonic struggle consists of the struggle to constitute subjects. Discourses are not limited to linguistic signs but are produced by/in all practices (private, religious, social, ideological,

economic and political apparatuses, for instance). Discourse analysis thus seeks to avoid any form of reductionism and also raises important questions of processes of social reproduction. It, however, does not deny the economic determinancy or disregard relations of production. But as Stuart Hall has observed

The economic cannot effect a final closure on the domain of ideology, in the strict sense of always guaranteeing a result. It cannot always secure a particular set of correspondences or always deliver particular modes of reasoning to particular classes according to their place within its system.

Hall explains why

because (a) ideological categories are developed, generated and transformed according to their own laws of development and evolution; though, of course, they are generated out of given materials. It is also because (b) of the necessary "openness" of historical development to practice and struggle.<sup>8</sup>

If society itself is constituted through discourse all social actors are also subjects of particular discourses. A subject is thus a bearer of ideologies and discourses. Subjects are constructed in discourse and "subjectivity" is a matrix of positions discursively created. Thus when it is argued that Du Plessis attempted to reconstitute the malay subject through a series of practices (ideological articulation, social and political organisation and so on) he tried to (re)create and make "real" a subject position dislocated from other subject positions. In other words, to constitute a unified subject - the malay subject-position. However as "subjectivity" is dispersed across a range of discourses a unified subject never exists. But the contra-

dictions and inconsistencies between/among discourses does not mean that a particular discourse (or a combination of discourses) cannot be hegemonic at a particular historic conjuncture. Laclau and Mouffe have said that:

Each individual as participant in a series of different social relations is therefore the locus of a plurality of determinations to which correspond subjective positions constructed through discourses and practices with their corresponding interests... Which positionality (such as class) will play that role (as articulation principle of subjectivity and political consciousness) will depend on the discursive practices in which an individual is inserted, and the type of antagonism and of subjectivity they construct.

Specialists of this mode of analysis may find fault with the lacunae that occur in this rendition of some features of discourse analysis.<sup>10</sup> But the basic aspects mentioned and included in this investigation of how a subject is historically constituted and disarticulated represent a modest investigation.

#### Footnotes

1. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*
2. In correspondence from Robert Ross, 30/7/86
3. De Roubaix was largely responsible for inviting the Ottoman Kurd, Abubakr Effendi, to the Cape in 1862 via his connections with Imperial Britain. Without assessing local needs Effendi was to act as teacher-cleric for the Muslims. Soon after his arrival in Cape Town conflict centred around Effendi and his sectarian Islamic views.
4. See Bibliography and also the paper by Shula Marks, "Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity : Natal and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism", African Studies Seminar, UCT, July 1986.
5. See S. Dubow, "Holding 'A Just Balance Between White and Black' : the Native Affairs Department in South Africa c. 1920 - 33", African Studies Seminar Paper,

UCT, April 1986.

6. The theoretical explanation that follows draws largely on a paper by A. Merrifield, "Beyond Class Politics : The Political Practice of the Native Representative Council", unpublished Association for Sociology in Southern Africa paper, 1985.
7. Quoted in E. Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, p.100
8. S. Hall, Marxism Without Guarantees in B. Williams, Marx 100 years on, p.83
9. E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, Recasting Marxism : Hegemony and New Political Movements in Socialist Review, 12(66), 1982.
10. For examples of Discourse analysis approaches to concrete historical phenomena see A. Merrifield, op cit. also A. Merrifield, "The Art of Insurrection - A discursive analysis of Lenin's writings, September - October 1917", unpublished American Political Science Association Conference paper, Washington, 1986.

## CHAPTER ONE

### I.D. DU PLESSIS: THE POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT.

In March 1951 Izak David Du Plessis assumed the post of Commissioner for Coloured Affairs. The renowned poet now became a bureaucrat in a tentacle of the Apartheid State. When Du Plessis entered the State Bureaucracy South Africa also entered a tumultuous decade. The 1950s' was the first decade of Apartheid social engineering and a groundswell of popular protest swept through the country.<sup>1</sup> In the Western Cape Region struggles against the Apartheid State centred around the deployment of Coloured "racial" policies. It was especially the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM est. 1943) and the Anti-CAD (Coloured Affairs Department) which articulated resistance to the State. The broad context, then, in which Du Plessis starts as chief of a State bureaucracy is one in which a fairly coherent State engineers an Apartheid society, yet popular protest generates open challenges to the state by the end of decade.<sup>2</sup> In this context Du Plessis hoped to be viewed as a "neutral" figure, interested only in the "promotion" of the "coloured people". To his credit he was widely known in ruling-class and also to an extent in underclass circles, as a poet, author and academic and not as a "politician" or even being capable of being a State servant.<sup>3</sup> However, Du Plessis was eminently suited for the job of Commissioner for Coloured Affairs. His literary production had by the 1950s' already been considerable; reflecting an interest in the "coloureds" and especially the "malays". By this time too, Du Plessis had accumulated a vast knowledge of "malay" life and customs having written his doctorate on the "malay"

folksong. He had also founded the Cape Malay Choir Board in 1939 and a plethora of other services were rendered to the "community". His friend, Prime Minister D.F.Malan, was to call him the "slamse koning".<sup>4</sup> It is necessary to examine Du Plessis' personal history as a ruling-class actor and so establish just how he was bound by his class, political and ideological context.

The cultural and political context in which Du Plessis developed as an intellectual was marked by the struggle to effectively constitute an "Afrikaner nation". After the imperialist created union of 1910 the political terrain shifted and the Afrikaans-speaking bourgeoisie developed strategies of competition with Imperial British Capital, and also the mobilisation of "anti-imperialist" forces. The secret Afrikaner Broederbond, established in 1918, was a response by a section of the Afrikaans-speaking petty-bourgeoisie to the shifting political terrain. By 1929 the Bond needed a public front, and in December of that year the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (F.A.K) was established. The aim of the F.A.K was

die beskerming en uitbouing van 'n eie nasionale kultuur, gegrond op die godsdiens en tradisies van die Afrikaner.  
(emphasis added)<sup>5</sup>

Before 1940 the F.A.K had over 300 cultural, religious, welfare and youth organisations in its ambit of control.<sup>6</sup> However, the growth of this organisation was not without struggles and contradictions. The imperatives of cultural expression, as articulated by the F.A.K were subsumed by the imperatives of capital accumulation, though it never occurred as a "sell-out" of culture to capital. O'Meara has

observed that -

The mobilisation and centralisation of Afrikaner capital depended (also) upon a cultural and ideological offensive to transform what was termed the "economic consciousness" of the volk.<sup>7</sup>

The "cultural and ideological offensive" rested largely on the transformation of language consciousness. Thus, Afrikaans was not merely the official language of the F.A.K but the "protection" and "development" (handhaaf en bevorder) of the language was a central task. The language project was the first project undertaken by the F.A.K in 1929.

It was for strategic reasons that the Broederbond presented the F.A.K as a non-party political Front. In this way the majority of Afrikaans-speakers from all classes could be mobilised. The F.A.K, however, undertook a profoundly political programme even though this was obscured. Through such a strategy of "kultuur-politiek" instead of "party-politiek", the F.A.K could mobilize the "Afrikaner intellectuals".<sup>8</sup> Du Plessis was one such intellectual. As a journalist and poet writing in Afrikaans Du Plessis was pre-eminently a candidate for recruitment to serve the "Afrikaner volk".

In 1926 Du Plessis became Die Burger's first full-time sports editor. Die Burger was the mouthpiece for the "volk" in the Cape since it was founded by Cape Afrikaner businessmen in 1915. As sports editor, Du Plessis had the honoured task of reproducing the "volkspersoonlikheid" of the Afrikaners. Sports provided an essential "medium for national identification and factitious community" as Eric

Hobsbawn has observed.<sup>9</sup> Thus, to the F.A.K. and the cultural nationalists even Du Plessis' "verafrikaansing van ons sportterme" was of vital importance. Newspapers, and literature in general, also provided the means for the expression of nationalism; having an even greater impact than sport. From sports editor under Dr Donges (editor of Die Burger between 1924-1927) Du Plessis moved to become assistant-editor of Die Huisgenoot (est. in 1916). This family magazine became in 1923 a weekly "mondstuk vir volksbelange".<sup>10</sup> The "verafrikaansing" project was thus expanding, as the 6th congress of the F.A.K. at Bloemfontein, in 1941, was informed. "Via print and paper" as Benedict Anderson has observed in another context,

... they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions of people in their particular language-field and at the same time that only those hundreds of thousands or millions, so belonged. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally-imagined community.<sup>11</sup>

Izak David du Plessis was born in 1900 in Phillipstown, Cape Province. In 1908 the Du Plessis family moved to Cape Town where the father practised as an attorney. The move from the economically unproductive countryside to the industrializing urban centre had a formative influence on Du Plessis. Improved economic prospects and better living conditions in urban Cape Town did not distract Du Plessis from maintaining a strong emotional tie with the countryside. The rustic quiet and sprawling Karoo contrasted markedly from industrial Cape Town; and Du Plessis' romanticism was most probably linked to this longing for "nature". His naive romanticism, which was

later given academic substantiation as an English student, did not prevent him from involvement in the cultural struggle of white Afrikaans-speakers in Cape Town. Although the economic and cultural muscle of Afrikaaner nationalism was provided by the Cape Afrikaans-speakers Cape Town itself provided a hostile environment for cultural nationalists. Du Plessis' career of study and teaching at the University of Cape Town (then the South African College) started in 1918 when he enrolled for a B.A. degree in English, Latin and Nederlands. In 1921 Du Plessis completed his M.A. in Afrikaans en Nederlands. UCT was not conducive to the growth of Afrikaner culture - it was decidedly liberal and English. This, however, provided a context in which Afrikaans-speakers were forced to assert themselves. Du Plessis reflects on the situation which he experienced

In 'n oorwegende Engelse omgewing moes die Afrikaanse studente in daardie vroeë jare veg om hul identiteit te behou,

But the unintended consequence was that

die eerste groepe Afrikaanse skrywers en digters van die dertigerjare by die Universiteit van Kaapstad verskyn het.<sup>12</sup>

"Die Dertigers" became a literary tendency in Afrikaans with Du Plessis as leading representative of this "school". Distinctive of this tendency was its evocation of the exotic and its emphasis on the psychology and mystique of the individual.

In a hostile Cape Town a nationalist was in the making. Du Plessis' longing for the Karoo led him to visit Karoo towns frequently. In these escapes not only was his romantic spirit satisfied, but his Afrikaner subjectivity was deepened. Du Plessis says

Vir my was die Karoo dus ... 'n blywende skakel met 'n behoudende element van ons bevolkingsgroep: die Gereformeerdes wat aan die spits van ons taalstryd gestaan het.<sup>13</sup> (emphasis added)

Not only were the "Gereformeerdes" guarding the "taal en kultuur" in the Karoo, but there Du Plessis had access to the literature of the early and contemporary protagonists of Afrikaner cultural nationalism. Moving between liberal English-speaking Cape Town and the Afrikaner Karoo towns marked Du Plessis' early career. In Cape Town, Du Plessis operated in a narrow circle of intellectuals. The Afrikaner literary elite of Cape Town was organized in the Oranje-Klub. Otherwise, the Koffiehuis in the city centre was the rendezvous point. Here, in quieter circumstances the dialectics, morphology and romance of Afrikaans poetry and prose were debated. Poets such as Louis Leipoldt, Jan Cilliers, C.J.Langehoven and Du Plessis, and others discussed their favourite topics. In all probability power and politics were on the agenda, glossed by "kultuurpolitiek" or any other mystifications. Du Plessis' work was debated in the close circle of the University of Cape Town's literati and the Koffiehuis clique. Indeed, he was a poet of some stature and the Hertzog prize he won for poetry in 1937 served to bolster his eminence.

Du Plessis has noted the determining influences on his work

As ek 'n paar dinge moes noem wat so sterk op my ingewerk het dat hulle onvermydelik my werk moes kleur, sou ek se dat die Karoo, die Engelse Romantiese digters van die 19de eeu en die Maleise samelewing aan die Kaap is.<sup>14</sup>

The Karoo was both a material reference for Du Plessis' Afrikaans-nationalist aspirations and a fitting set for his

romantic imagination. His poetic imagination was shaped by the rural-urban dialectic in which he was posited. But he also formally studied the English Romantic tradition and borrowed from this tradition. Along with other South African poets drawing on the Romantic tradition Du Plessis' poetry to a large extent became

an almost entirely imaginary construct, promising redemption not through a state of society, but through a state of mind which specifically excluded social concerns.<sup>15</sup>

This famous Du Plessis' poem, published in 1943, set in District Six is emblematic of his romanticism where salvation is found in a particular state of mind -

Verflenterde kaalvoet klonkie  
Wat groente verkoop in die reën,  
Met jou lelike skurwe tone  
En hou ledelam hoepelbeen,  
Jy kom met jou venterliedjie  
Deur die mistige Kaapse straat  
En helder sing jy die woorde  
Op jou eie koddige maat:  
...  
Jy kom uit 'n deel van Kanaldorp  
Waar die dienders gewapend moet gaan  
En die weerlig van 'n skeermeslem  
In 'n donker hoek neer mag slaan.  
Miskien kan jy "Bismillah" se  
Vanmore, omdat in die kas  
Wat dae lank so leeg moet bly,  
Daar weer 'n broodjie was?  
Of dink jy al aan Nuwejaar  
As die troepe deur Waalstraat stroom  
Van die Bo-Kaap na die Onder-Kaap  
Langs die stomp van die Slaweboom?  
Is dit wat jou so laat bokspring  
En dans op jou hoepelbeen,  
Verflenterde kaalvoet klonkie,  
As jy groente verkoop in die reën?  
...

Here a tattered youngster hawks fruit and vegetables in run-down District Six (Kanaldorp) and, though starving, he is not unhappy. Raising to the same level the availability of bread and song, Du Plessis implies the ability of both to provide sustenance in conditions of impoverishment. Though

evoking a social context for the central figure, it remains vague and inconsequential as the individual figure is released from the context to experience his own nobility amidst whatever circumstances. Du Plessis cannot move beyond his romantic and class boundaries to dissect the society, to criticize it and suggest collective social action, instead of personal salvation. By 1943 Du Plessis was well-acquainted with the poverty of urban and inner-city Cape Town, but the rustic and exotic provided him with solutions. Thus his extensive collection of "Karoo poems" should be seen as both a romantic response and a nationalist reconnection with "die land".

Another side of the cultural nationalist concerns was the liberalism of some of its intellectuals. Moodie has noted that the "language nationalism was liberal".<sup>17</sup> Though the meaning Moodie attaches to "liberal" is unclear, it certainly meant that there was a sense of internal tolerance in the "movement". Du Plessis himself held to a broad "nasionale orientering" and avoided overt involvement in "party politics". But he was also on good terms with English-speakers and liberals. Though a member of the Oranje-Klub, in 1937 Du Plessis also joined the "English" Owl Club and by 1947 he was President of this exclusive club for "social intercourse among members of various professions and those qualified in Liberal Arts and Science".<sup>18</sup> The network of social relations Du Plessis established, and moved through, now included "Afrikaners", "liberals", "academics", "malays" and a range of other identities, though he was ideologically interpellated in the first instance as "Afrikaner".<sup>19</sup> But Du Plessis' romanticism was

not limited to the heights of poetry and imaginative prose. European Romanticism, in fact, provided an intellectual basis for the type of racism that was practised by the Afrikaans-speaking section of the ruling-class. Du Plessis drew on English Romanticism almost at the same time as Afrikaner ideologues drew on German Romanticism in developing their anthropological tradition - "volkekunde". Volkekunde, as an academic discipline, began to be taught at Afrikaner universities from the 1920s'. The F.A.K. and the South African Bureau for Racial Affairs (SABRA) vigorously promoted the ideology of "eie identiteit" which underscored the ideology of volkekunde. Committed from the start to a vigorous empiricism it has been shown that

volkekundiges are not empiricists: the intellectual tradition they follow stems from the continental romanticism and idealism.<sup>20</sup> (emphasis added)

The volkekundige tradition stresses the Ethnos theory and assigns tremendous explanatory value to ethnicity

Ethnos theory starts with the proposition that mankind is divided into volke (nations, peoples) and that each volk has its own particular culture, which may change but always remains authentic to the groups in question ... An individual is born into a particular volk; its members are socialized into its attendant culture; therefore they acquire a volkspersoonlikheid (folk-personality). It follows that the most important influence on an individual's behaviour in any social context is his ethnos membership.<sup>21</sup> (emphasis added)

A close reading of Du Plessis' poetry and prose reveals that he was profoundly influenced by volkekunde categories of thought and analysis. Thus he wrote "Karoo poems", which apart from its Romanticism, addresses an Afrikaner subject, "Eastern poems" of exotic princes and palaces, and "malay" poems on the "malays".<sup>22</sup> His prose captured moments of the

"malay underworld", "witch-craft" and countless tales and short-stories segregating reality into "us" and "them", "malays" and "coloureds", "Afrikaners" and "Kaffirs".<sup>23</sup>

To Romanticists the "unknown" and "unfamiliar" were often the subject of meditation and literary production. An inner-revolt against the familiar rigidities imposed by industrial society was exemplified in their pre-occupation with "other" peoples, cultures and literatures, Raymond Williams has observed that

New valuations of the irrational; the "unconscious" and the legendary or mythical developed alongside new valuations of the folk-cultures within which some of these materials seemed to be found.<sup>24</sup>

In the otherwise drab and pedestrian Cape Town the "malays" were "different" and "exotic" as a Cape Argus reviewer of Du Plessis' "Tales from the Malay Quarter" wrote in 1945

Cape Town would be a very different place without its Malays, that semi-Eastern colony, which adds so much colour and gaiety to daily life here.<sup>25</sup>

Thus in Cape Town itself, material conditions obtained that could feed the romantic imagination, and Du Plessis was enamoured to not only "describe" "them" but also "protect" "them". But the "malays" were not only "exotic", "their" history at the Cape had relevance to the geneology of Afrikaner culture as well. Dr D.F.Malan, Minister of Interior, constructed a history of "malay"- "Afrikaner" relations in 1925 when he said:

"Die Maleise gemeenskap het vir hulle self in Suid-Afrika 'n bepaalde status verkry, 'n status waarop hulle trots kan wees. In die eerste plaas vorm hulle een van die oudste elemente van die Suid-Afrikaanse volk. Hulle het byna saam met die witman hierheen gekom en die geskiedenis saam deurgemaak met die

witman. Die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika is ook hulle geskiedenis. Die witman het nie hierheen gekom om vir die Maleiers beskewing te bring nie. Hulle was altyd beskaaf, en het hierheen gekom nadat hulle die witman se beskewing aangeneem het. Afrikaans is nie alleen hulle taal nie, maar hulle het saam met die Hollandssprekende witman daardie taal gemaak. Dit is hulle taal in die volste sin van die woord.<sup>26</sup>

Malan's fraternising discourse was part of a larger attempt to gain non-white support for the then year-old Pact government. Later in his speech Malan constitutes the "malay" as the good subject against the "asiatic" (Indian) - the bad subject at that historic conjuncture. But except for the exigencies of the political moment (rallying support for the government) the "malays" remained "different". Du Plessis set out to explore this "other" "community" in terms of its functionality to the Afrikaner cultural heritage. Thus "Die Bydrae van die Kaapse Maleier tot die Afrikaanse volkslied" by Du Plessis was published in 1935.<sup>27</sup> The "elder-statesman" of Afrikaner cultural studies, S.J. du Toit, reviewed it in Die Huisgenoot in 1936,<sup>28</sup> and its value for volkskunde in South Africa was underlined. Furthermore, it was seen as an encouragement to explore, in similar detail, the "volkskunde" of the 1834 "Voortrekker movement". Whilst in 1935 Du Plessis' academic endeavour became a cultural commodity circulating in nationalist circles, two years earlier he was explorer amongst the "real malays" when he travelled to Java and other islands. It does not appear that Du Plessis undertook the visit especially for research purposes, but it did strengthen his interest in the "other". Du Plessis wrote in 1951 that

Kennismaking met hierdie eksotiese deel van Kaapstad se bevolking het my ook belangstelling vir die Ooste gewek, 'n

charged with a civilizing mission. Below this was scattered the "Bantu" with the now fully-fledged array of "tribes", the "coloured", "malay" and others. But Afrikaner intellectuals had as curious bedfellows the liberal intellectuals who also cast reality in Romantic and Social Darwinist terms. Divergent interpretations and membership of competing political "movements" , however, mediated a variety of, and sometimes contradictory positions around the "civilizing mission"<sup>32</sup>. That Du Plessis moved in Afrikaner and liberal academic circles equally comfortably may seem contradictory, but the ideological points of confluence of the competing ruling-class fractions provided coherence to the dominant classes: the tradition of Social Darwinism and Romanticism are cases in point.

Du Plessis' article in Die Huisgenoot of the 5th April 1950 is paradigmatic of his anthropology and as such the volkekundige tradition. The article is titled "Die Maleise Samelewing aan die Kaap - Herkoms en Oorspronklike Taal; Geskiedenis aan die Kaap; Rassevermenging", the article is a detailed exploration of the "ethnicity" of the "malays", their "origins", history and religion. This then is the "Maleise Samelewing": its ethnic composition and origins give both form and essence to the "society" of the "Malays". The silences and absence of social context and process are partly wilful and partly unconscious. Du Plessis was a carrier of objective structures of knowledge and power, and as such saw the world in ruling-class terms: notwithstanding the fact that he was an individual subject with a mind of his own.

The broad context in which Du Plessis was located prior to

his appointment as Commissioner for Coloured Affairs has been traced. He emerged at the moment of mobilization of Afrikaans-speakers and he was both mobilized and acted in a mobilizing capacity. Du Plessis answered the "calling" of nationalism in the early years as a journalist, poet and teacher. At the same time he generated a cultural niche for Afrikaner poets and writers, yet he was attached to expressions of liberalism.<sup>33</sup> Du Plessis' social and intellectual role was deployed through the categories of Romanticism and Social Darwinism stressing the "individual" and his release from social constraints, the obsession with the exotic (and sometimes erotic),<sup>34</sup> and the "protection" of "weaker peoples" and their gradual evolution. The "malays" were not only objectified in his literary work, he also actively devoted himself to re-construct the "malay" "history" and "culture" and in this way help to drive a permanent wedge in underclass communities.

#### Footnotes:

1. See T.Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945
2. The 1950s' was a 'decade of defiance' so that by 1960 the State had brutally clamped down on opposition. See Lodge, above. Yet the 1950s' witnessed a consolidated State enforcing Apartheid, and capitalist accumulation in the post-world war years generally proceeded gloriously.
3. However, there were those acutely aware of Du Plessis. The Torch, 13\2\51, wrote of Du Plessis' appointment: "Like all the great friends of the Non-Europeans, Dr Du Plessis has now been given an opportunity by the Government to use his special interest in the Non-Europeans to assist the working out of segregation for them." See also The Torch's editorial of 26\6\51
4. I.D.Du Plessis, Aantekenige uit Tuynstraat, p.57
5. Constitution of the F.A.K. in the Donges collection,

6. See A.Davids, "From complacency to Activism" unpublished paper, p.9
7. D. O'Meara, Volkskapitalisme, p.134
8. ibid, p.74
9. E. Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870 - 1914" in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (ed), The Invention of Tradition, p.300
10. Du Plessis, op cit, p.116
11. B. Anderson, Imagined Communities, p.47
12. Du Plessis, op cit, p.116
13. Du Plessis, op cit, p.73
14. Du Plessis in P.J. Nienaber (ed), Jonger Skrywers oor eie werk, p.54
15. S. Watson, "Sydney Clouts and the Limits of Romanticism", unpublished paper, p.5
16. I.D. Du Plessis, Mens en Ster, p.116. This poem was first published in Du Plessis' 1943 collection, "Die Vlamende Fez" (The Blazing Fez!)
17. T.D. Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom, p.47
18. Constitution of Owl Club, 1952, in Owl Club Collection, CA 1532/1/7
19. For a brief overview of the advances of this Althusserian concept of interpellation see C. Belsey, Critical Practice, pp56-84. On page 64 she explains: "Ideology interpellates concrete individuals as subjects, and bourgeois ideology in particular emphasizes the fixed identity of the individual." But, "The subject is... the site of contradiction, and is perpetually in the process of construction, thrown into crisis by alterations in language and in the social formation, capable of change", p.65
20. J. Sharp, "Can We Study Ethnicity? A Critique of Fields of Study in South African Anthropology", in Social Dynamics 6(1), 1980, p.2
21. J. Sharp "The Roots and Development of Volkekunde in South Africa" in Journal of Southern African Studies 8(1), 1981, p.19
22. See his various collections and for a choice selection see his Mens en Ster: verse 1925 - 1978
23. See V.A. February, Mind Your Colour: The "Coloured" Stereotype in South African Literature. February

observes that the short-story genre is used by racists as an "appropriate" genre for writing about "inferior" people. See also Du Plessis' short "poem" called "Kaffertjie" in Mens en Ster, p. 179.

24. R. Williams, Keywords, p.275
25. The Cape Argus, 1/12/45. The reviewer added that "the stories are told simply and directly ... and they retain a childlike air of wonder about them which is exceedingly attractive."
26. Quoted in UG 20/1954 p.32
27. This was Du Plessis' doctoral thesis in published form.
28. Die Huisgenoot, 28/2/36
29. Du Plessis in Nienaber, op cit, p.54
30. T. Ranger, "Missionaries, Migrants and the Manyika: The invention of ethnicity in Zimbabwe", unpublished paper, p.5
31. S. Dubow, "Race, Civilisation and Culture: The elaboration of segregationist discourse in the inter-war years", unpublished paper, p.6
32. See the papers by Dubow and the work of Paul Rich.
33. The Cape Times, 16/12/81, reported the speech of former Judge President, J.W.S. van Zijl, at Du Plessis' funeral. He said of Du Plessis: "In attitude, I believe, he was a strong 19th century liberal ..."
34. Du Plessis' erotic verse are all unpublished, as far as is known, but there are persons familiar with his writing in this genre as I gathered from informants.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DU PLESSIS' ETHNIC MODEL OF THE "MALAY"

"He is introspective, kind towards women, children and animals; inclined to speak slowly, to be passive and insolvent. When aroused he may lose all self-control and run amok"<sup>1</sup>

"The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original. The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job ..."<sup>2</sup>

Said's advice above is useful yet Du Plessis' construction of "malay" ethnicity and history should be subjected to examination. In this way will both inaccuracy and imagery be revealed. Du Plessis was not alone to meditate on the ethnicity and history of the "malays". In fact he drew on a corpus of secondary sources devoted to understanding "the Malays". Sources include: Aspelting's "The Malays of Cape Town" (1883); Mayson's, "On the Malays of Cape Town" (1861); Lady Duff Gordon's "Letters from the Cape" (1820) and Kollisch's, "The Mussalman Population at the Cape" (1867). The colonialist ruling-class location of such observers certainly influenced them, but the colonial discourse of these works awaits deconstruction. That is, the analysis of the processes and conditions of their construction out of the available assumptions (at the historic moment of their production).<sup>3</sup> It is especially in Du Plessis' doctoral thesis and "classic" "The Cape Malays" that his conceptions of the history and ethnicity of the "Malays" are developed.

Du Plessis starts by constructing a model of the "original" "Malays". This ethnographic paradigm consists of a detailed description of the facial and physical structure of the "Malay": the average size, colour and complexion, facial structure and hair texture. The psychological make-up of the "Malay", according to the Du Plessis paradigm, presents a "quiet", "kind", "slow-speaking", "fatalistic" and "passive" subject. Despite such a mental constitution a destructive instinct lurks within. Adding a caveat to the preceding description of a languid "Malay" subject, Du Plessis writes

Tog kan hy in sekere omstandighede tot 'n staat van raserny vervoer word, waardeur hy alle selfbeheer verloor en amok maak<sup>4</sup>

Against such a paradigm is the mid-twentieth century "Cape Malay" compared. Du Plessis explained

die Kaapse Moeslims van vandag ten spyte van sekere ras-egte trekke, in groot mate van die oorspronklike tipes afwyk<sup>5</sup>

What caused the corruption of the "oorspronklike" "Malay" is what Du Plessis called a "vermengingsproses". This "process of mixing" was a common volkekundige explanatory concept when Du Plessis wrote. And he explains the elements which "mixed":

Die Bantu, neger, Hottentot en kleurling aan die een kant, en die Javaan, Arabier, Chinees en Ceylonees aan die ander kant, het onder andere tot die vermengingsproses bygedra<sup>6</sup>

Du Plessis' interest was not in, what he called the "slams" or "slamaaier" but particularly the "Malay section" of the "Homo Islamicus" in Cape Town. To Du Plessis and the volkekundiges the "process of mixture" affected mainly features and psychology. The social context and continuing

"ethnic" "mixture", and thus the fluidity of the "ethnic models" were never considered. Du Plessis constructs an ethnic model of the "malays" with origins in "Indonesia" but otherwise the model remains vague and general unlike other more detailed constructions of ethnic models. But if his model was vague it served his purpose of attributing to the "Malays" a "pure" ethnic past; and whatever remains of the "purity" should thus be preserved. From constructing a model Du Plessis continues to describe the history of the "malays" at the Cape. After the natural alpha of social existence - ethnicity - the "geskiedenis" of the "race" is considered, then the expression of ethnicity in history - and that is "taal". But Du Plessis also marshalls the evidence of the Department of Anthropology at UCT, on the contemporary state of "Malay" ethnic "purity". He quotes a Mr Goodwin of the Department of Anthropology:

I make no attempt to account for the large member of relatively pure Malays. Various explanations might be suggested. Perhaps the Malay characteristics are dominant in cases of mixture; or perhaps the characteristics of other races tend to resemble the Malay type when mixed  
...

That Du Plessis' unsubstantial academic prose went unchallenged is hardly surprising. The social and intellectual context of the pre-second World War period entertained such ethnography. As J.M.Coetzee has shown in an analysis of the works of Sarah Gertrude Millin, such ideas were

viable intellectual currency for a long time, and were based on a great deal of what passed for scientific research<sup>8</sup>

Du Plessis' historical writing also went unchallenged. In his doctoral thesis he submits that "a paar Maleiers" were sent to the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, and again in 1658. From 1658 the narrative jumps to 1694 when Shaykh Yusuf arrived on the Voetboog, at the Cape. A brief description of the Shaykh's sojourn at the Cape is followed by the conclusion that the major effect of his stay at the Cape was the "enhancement" of the "Malay race". As Du Plessis says

Hierdeur het die Maleiers in Suid-Afrika  
'n klompie rasgenote van goeie stand  
ryker geword ...<sup>9</sup>

The "history" ends abruptly in 1767 when the Council of India prohibited the importation of slaves. The major categories of "malays" at the Cape were the slaves, political exiles and later the "free blacks". Du Plessis argues that the exiles were of greater consequence, though they were relatively few, because they contributed so richly to "Maleise karaktetrekke". Thus the exiles - such as Shaykh Yusuf and the Rajah of Tambora - because of their superior position in the social and political hierarchy of the "Malay homeland" possessed "purer blood" than the slaves. The exiles could ensure the pure features of the "malays" whereas the slaves could not. In "The Cape Malays" the historical narrative is similar except that 1667 is seen as the year in which the first "Malays" arrived at the Cape; those "Asiatics" who arrived before were, according to Du Plessis, not "Mohammadans". Du Plessis also pays much more attention to Shaykh Yusuf who, he argues, was the "founder of the Muslim faith in South Africa"<sup>10</sup>

What marks Du Plessis' historical understanding of his

subject is the centrality of ethnicity. His historiography ignores dynamic social process in Cape slave society and concentrates of the great figures, such as Shaykh Yusuf. Following Robert Shell,<sup>11</sup> Du Plessis' thesis on the expansion of Islam at the Cape can be described as "the came and was" thesis. That is, Muslims came, as "Malays" and so a neat transportation of Islam from Java to Cape Town materialized. In reality "Malays" as Du Plessis contrues them, in all probability never existed. Davids summarises the research on what Du Plessis has called the "Malays" and their religion:

The establishment and spread of Islam at the Cape of Good hope was in the beginning, ... mainly the responsibility of the slaves of Bengal, the Malabar Coast of India. These slaves, unlike the Indonesians(sic), had a long tradition of Islam.<sup>12</sup> (emphasis added)

Du Plessis thus overstates the role of the great figures, and constructs an ethnic model of "Malays" at the Cape when such a category never existed. By the end of the seventeenth century slaves from Bengal constituted more than 50% of the slave population as Boeseken and Bradlow have shown. In the eighteenth century slaves from the Celebes, the Bougies or Bughinese, complemented the Muslim slaves from India. By this time slaves from the Malay Archipelago was part of the slave society. But by far the most, were slaves born at Cape Town. Bradlow has concluded that

Ethnically the slave population of the Cape was a very heterogeneous one. It was composed of negros from West Africa, of Bantu-speaking people from Angola and Mozambique, of Negroid Polynesians from Madagascar, of Indians from India, and of varied groups of Polynesian type people from the Indonesian Archipelago and

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elsewhere in the Far East.<sup>13</sup>

Against Du Plessis' arguments for a "Malay" ethnicity stands a wealth of evidence on the fluid nature of "ethnic" relations. And the emphasis on the period until the early nineteenth century works against him. The following table from Bradlow indicates that by 1700 only 14.58% of the slaves came from "Indonesia" and less than one percent from Malaya.<sup>14</sup>

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Africa - Madagascar	397	30,63
Ceylon	20	1,54
India	653	50,38
Indonesia	189	14,58
Malaya	4	0,32
Indo - China	1	0,08
Japan	1	0,08
Cape of Good Hope	10	0,77
Unidentified	21	1,62
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	1 296	100,00
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But this is not to deny that a specifically Islamic phenomenon emerged among the slaves, and later underclass culture. However, it was not a "malay" ethnic phenomenon. Robert Ross has said that the "Islamic slaves" were known, "probably as a result of back-formation, as Malays."<sup>15</sup> By 1861, when "malay" as a descriptive term was already an established practice according to travellers reports, Lady Duff Gordon an English visitor to Cape Town explained what was meant by "Malay"

(it) here means Mohammedan. They were Malays, but now they embrace every shade, from the blackest nigger to the blooming English woman.<sup>16</sup>

A possible explanation for the use of the term "Malay" as an ethnic category was the use of the Malayu language by slaves. Du Plessis' paradigm considers "taal" as a fundamen-

tal element in ethnic identity and he argued that when Malayu ceased to be used by the "Malays" a vital weapon in their struggle for "national identity" was lost.<sup>17</sup> Malayu and creolized Portuguese persisted after slave emancipation in 1834 and gradually Dutch was incorporated into the language of the underclasses. The incorporation of diverse linguistic elements was a way of surviving in an oppressed society. Dutch was "corrupted" in underclass usage, and Du Plessis uses this to further construct differences in underclass social relations. Thus, he argues there exists "Malay-Afrikaans", "Koelie-Afrikaans", "Kaffer-Afrikaans" and "Kleurling-Afrikaans".<sup>18</sup>

Du Plessis was not a professional historian and a detailed reworking of his arguments is not warranted. What is important to note is the intellectual and political context in which Du Plessis was producing knowledge. The ethnic model, "great figure" historical theory and "taal" consciousness were key organizing concepts in the Afrikaner nationalist project and Du Plessis employed these concepts in constructing a "Malay nation" that once existed. The agony of underclass life was never considered by Du Plessis, nor were the "great figures" constructed in a context of anti-colonial struggle. When "malays" ran "amok" it was not due to their ethnic composition. Running "amok" was an act of resistance by slaves; as Muslim slaves did when they were denied access to their religious activity. As late as 1891 the press still reported on "Malay rowdiness." The Lantern reported in August of that year

"Malay outrages are getting fearfully

common - far commoner than the perusal of Police Court records would lead us to infer. Rowdy Malays haunt the streets in gangs, and use feet, stones and knobkerries in street fights.

But the context of unemployment in which this occurred was not reported<sup>19</sup>. Shaykh Yusuf was praised by Du Plessis but not as an anti-colonial hero. It took The Torch to describe Shaykh Yusuf as an anti-colonial hero, invert Du Plessis' romanticism and produce popular history. The Torch had a feature article titled "The Truth About Sheik Yusuf" which noted that:

As a rebel Yusuf was "evil" to the Dutch. The Indian Council decided to banish him to the Cape. He was confined at Zandvliet near Eerste River. Many Malay and other slaves and workers of the Cape used to come and visit him. They regarded him as a sage. The Dutch at the Cape seemed to have been careful not to reveal that he was, in fact, a REBEL.<sup>20</sup>

The only moment when Du Plessis' texts and ethnic model were politically confronted was when his "The Malay Quarter and its People" appeared in 1954. Until then Du Plessis' "knowledge" of the "Malays" went unchallenged and he used his presuppositions to re-construct the malay subject. This occurred, not textually, but in the material conditions of social and cultural production in Cape Town.

#### Footnotes

1. I.D. Du Plessis, The Cape Malays, p.3

2. E. Said, Orientalism, p.21
3. See C. Belsey, Critical Practice, p.104
4. I.D. Du Plessis, Die Bydrae Van Kaapse Maleiers tot die Afrikaanse Volkslied, p.5
5. ibid., p.5
6. ibid., p.5
7. quoted in I.D. Du Plessis, The Cape Malays, p.1
8. J.M. Coetzee, "Blood, Flaw, Taint, Degeneration: The ca Sarah Gertrude Millin" in "English Studies in Africa" 1980, p.42
9. I.D. Du Plessis, Die Bydrae Van die Kaapse Maleiers tot die Afrikaanse Volkslied, p.8
10. I.D. Du Plessis, The Cape Malays, p.6
11. R. Shell, "The Establishment and Spread of Islam at the Cape from the Beginning of Company Rule to 1838," B.A. (Hons) Thesis, UCT, p.2
12. A. Davids, Mosques of the Bo-Kaap, p.41
13. F.Bradlow, "The Origins of the Early Cape Muslims" in Bradlow, F and Cairns, M. The Early Cape Muslims, p.105
14. ibid., p.92
15. R. Ross, The Occupations of Slaves in Eighteenth Century Cape Town in "STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF CAPE TOWN", II, p.12
16. Duff Gordon, Letters from the Cape, p.37
17. Du Plessis, op cit, p.9
18. Du Plessis, op cit, p.15
19. Quoted in M. Ajam, "The Raison D'etre of the Muslim Mission Primary School in Cape Town and Environs from 1860 to 1980 ..." Ph.D. Thesis, UCT, 1986. Thanks go to Dr. Ajam for access to the thesis. p.
20. The Torch 12/12/52

## CHAPTER THREE

### TOWARDS MASTERY OVER THE MALAYS c. 1930 - 1954

"The colonizer instals chiefs who support him and who are to some degree accepted by the masses; he gives these chiefs material privileges such as education for their eldest children, creates chiefdoms where they did not exist before, develops cordial relations with religious leaders, builds mosques, organizes journeys to Mecca etc" <sup>1</sup>

"The most far-reaching inventions of tradition in colonial Africa took place when the Europeans believed themselves to be respecting age-old African custom. What were called customary law, customary land-rights, customary political structure and so on, were all in fact invented by colonial codification". <sup>2</sup>

The burgeoning discipline of folklore studies in all probability stimulated Du Plessis to study the "malay folksong" in particular and the "community" in general. His 1935 doctoral dissertation was a study of the "malay folksong" and its relation to the Afrikaans folksong.<sup>3</sup> Du Plessis' doctoral project placed him in a position to conduct fieldwork among the "malays" and so purposefully enter the Bo-Kaap - District Six underclass cultural matrix. By this time primarily concerned with collecting data Du Plessis made contact with older-generation "malays" who were able to answer his inquiries about the origins and forms of the "malay folksong". The songs were almost entirely orally transmitted, and thus circulated through time and space in popular memory. Furthermore, accretions with the passage of time obfuscated the appreciation of the songs as they were originally composed and performed.

As the folksong was Du Plessis' pathway into the "malay community" and the Bo-Kaap and District Six localities a brief sketch of the folksong as a socio-historical phenomenon is warranted. Oral testimony<sup>4</sup> suggests that Du Plessis' first informant was a Supreme Court messenger of Indian origin. Sultan Abatti was well-acquainted with the network of relations in the Bo-Kaap and through him Du Plessis located more informants. In one informant Du Plessis found a major source of information. Rasdien Cornelius, or simply Rasdien as he was known to Du Plessis, became Du Plessis' source on the "malay folksong", as he was then independently collecting the "Nederlandseliedtjies."<sup>5</sup>

Rasdien started collecting the songs 'in the early 1890s'.<sup>6</sup> In 1887 Black American ("Negro") singers staged performances in Cape Town and the influence of their mode of performance became manifest by the early 1890's.<sup>6</sup> It was the influence of the Dantu brothers that an organized mode of performing the Nederlandseliedtjies found currency in Cape Town. Sharing similar social conditions, the Dantu brothers and Rasdien Cornelius initiated the re-formation of an expression of popular underclass culture in Cape Town. Choral folksinging "teams" such as "The Good Hope Sports Club" and the "Darktown Fire Brigade" were informally constituted before the turn of the century.<sup>7</sup> Nederlanse-liedtjies, which interested Du Plessis, were not the only songs performed but songs reflecting the social context of the choir-singers were also composed.<sup>8</sup> A sense of the pervasive interest in the singing accompanied by disdain on the part of the more settled citizens of Cape Town is reflected in correspondence to the local press in 1897.

Complaining<sup>1</sup> of the choral singing "A Faithful Moslem" wrote to the Cape Argus<sup>9</sup>

Now, the real thing that is strictly prohibited by the Moslem law is drinking, singing, and rioting in the canteens and streets at all hours of the day and night, which can be seen in Cape Town at all times from morning until the last thing at night, and has become a great nuisance and disgrace to Cape Town, especially at New Year time ...

In further correspondence<sup>10</sup> "A Faithful Moslem" accuses "Malay Priests" of partaking in the spontaneous pleasure with the "Malay Good Hopes". Rasdien Cornelius was part of these early singing "teams" but his relevance lies in his collection of the Nederlandseliedtjies. With the collaboration of a Dutch seaman, Frans de Jongh, Rasdien could compare his contemporary collection with the refined Dutch compositions.<sup>11</sup> Du Plessis credits Rasdien with the importation of 10,000 pamphlets of Dutch songs and 1,000 books of songs from Amsterdam.<sup>12</sup>

By the time of his death in 1936 Rasdien Cornelius had a considerable collection of songs. George Manuel says that he had collected more than 300 "restored" songs.<sup>13</sup> That Du Plessis dedicated his doctoral thesis to Rasdien could be interpreted as a warm appreciation by Du Plessis of Rasdien's assistance. However, the bulk of the thesis is a selection and arrangement, with some interpretation, of Rasdien's collection. The Huisgenoot reviewer praised Du Plessis' book and added the caveat that it was but an extended "versameling".<sup>14</sup> All that Du Plessis admitted in later years was

Deur Rasdien Cornelius en sy "Hollandse"

troepe het ek met die tradisionele liedere van die Kaapse Maleiers kennis gemaak.<sup>15</sup>

Oral evidence<sup>16</sup> suggests that Du Plessis went further than sophisticated plagiarism; he in fact manipulated Mrs Cornelius' circumstances in decrepit Bo-Kaap to appropriate her deceased husband's material. His appropriation of the Rasdien collection was a precursor to his later appropriation of a working-class cultural creation - the choral singing.

Beginning with an academic undertaking Du Plessis ingratiated himself with his informants. Indeed Du Plessis established his credentials amongst a few - such as the Dantu brothers - and was soon accepted in choir circles. About his early experiences in the Bo-Kaap with the Dantu family, Du Plessis reminisces thus

By hulle, sowel as by Rasdien en Ederoos van Waalstraat, het ek oor die jare baie aande deurgebring. Hulle het gesing, stories vertel, raaisels gevra, oor die ou dae gesels onderwyl die vrouens tee met soetkoekies ... en ander lekkernye bedien<sup>17</sup>

Du Plessis' follow-up on his acceptance by a Bo-Kaap musical elite were his jejune productions on "malay folklore"<sup>18</sup> in the Bo-Kaap and the creation of the Cape Malay Choir Board. Created by a ruling-class actor, as it was, the Board could not but perform a politically immobilizing function at the same time as providing a forum for popular musical performance.

By 1939, when Du Plessis formed the Cape Malay Choir Board, extra-parliamentary politics in the Western Cape was still characterized by liberal discourse and petty-bourgeois

leadership, which was to change only in the post-World War II years. At the rhetorical apex was Dr Abdullah Abdurahman's African Peoples' Organisation (est. 1902), and a Hertzog-inspired Afrikaner Nasionale Bond (est. 1925) crawled after ruling-class concessions.<sup>19</sup> By World War II the politically fickle Cape Malay Association (est. 1923) was just about moribund. With a leadership and meagre membership drawn from the skilled labour aristocracy, petty-commodity producers and the exceptional property-owner or professional, the CMA articulated itself as a socio-religious organisation. As an organisation representative of "malays" the CMA defined for its members a political identity on the terrain of extra-parliamentary competition for recognition, and concessions from the ruling-class.<sup>20</sup> The CMA's panacea for the political and economic inequalities of South Africa was a peaceful wait on ruling-class generosity and, as CMA President, Arshad Gamiet wrote in *The Sun* in 1934

Meanwhile the Coloured races must build-up and progress to that stage when White South Africa will be proud to call us South Africans or Afrikaners ...<sup>21</sup>

Whilst the CMA suggested waiting and were devising petty-bourgeois strategies for progress, material conditions in its supposed constituencies degenerated progressively (Indeed, the CMA floated a company - The Protea Trading Company early in 1934 and Gamiet started the Castle Property and Estate Agency in October 1934)<sup>22</sup> A manifestation of the social conditions in District Six is the dinner for "over 600 poor Moslems" in 1935 arranged by the Salvation Army and the CMA's Salie Dollie, amongst others, at the Mosque in Aspeling Street.<sup>23</sup> But the CMA neither attended to social

crisis nor to its own status by the late 1930s'.

And as the "articulate" went into obscurity Du Plessis was sweating to parade the "inarticulate" "malays" and in this way re-articulate the "malay" as an ethnic subject with voices and a presence. It was on one of Du Plessis' frequent visits to the Dantu family in 1938 that the decision to organise a choral-singing competition was taken.<sup>24</sup> Springbok rugby player Bennie Osler was with Du Plessis on that visit; and then they arranged the City Hall for the first formal affair for most of the choir-members. The ostensible cause for this first concert, according to Du Plessis, was

die bedoeling met die konsert was dat dit as voorbereiding moes dien vir die stigting van 'n organisasie wat deur middel van jaarlikse sang wedstryde bewaring van die "ou" liedere sou bevorder.<sup>25</sup>

The 1938 concert was a resounding success, and in April 1939 eight choirs inaugurated the Cape Malay Choir Board at a concert in the City Hall.<sup>26</sup> The Board epitomised the ironies of a working-class activity being patronized by the socially powerful. Drawn from the settled working-class, male and aged from thirty years up the Choirs were spontaneously supported by a cross-section of Cape Town's populace. And whilst Du Plessis emphasized their Dutch-Afrikaans origins and members themselves communicated in an Afrikaans patois of their own making they, however, proudly paraded under British-Imperial banners such as the Royal Coronations, Sweetheart Mays, Imperial Celtics or simply the Jolly Boys. Du Plessis' duplicity lies in his endeavour to transform the choral-singing into a disciplined formal association with a

ruling-class actor as president, as he was to be until his old-age. An ethnic badge was glued to the organisation and a "malay" tradition was thereby "restored." In this way the Turkish fez - hardly "malay" in reality<sup>27</sup> - became compulsory headgear for the choirs. From Du Plessis' first concert in 1938 it became "tradition", by Choir Board constitution, to march at a certain time of the year, in certain types of dress, singing certain songs ("moppies", "ghommaliedtjies" and so on). Eric Hobsbawm has observed that the invention of tradition is

essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition.<sup>28</sup>

The spectacle of the "malay" choral-singing "tradition" experienced its formative period in the hard years of the Second World War. The happy growth of the Choirs was recorded by one newspaper in the following terms

The Cape Malay Choir Board which was established in 1937 (sic) now has a membership of 26 choirs. The "Navys" is the youngest affiliated choir of the Board having joined its ranks this year.

On Monday last the Board held its second singing competition in the City Hall, which was packed to the doors. Several scores of people had to turn back owing to lack of accomodation.<sup>29</sup>

Du Plessis did not dissipate his energy in the establishment of a new emblem of "malay" ethnicity. He had academic commitments at UCT; but he could still show devotion to the cause of his "malay" choirs. This was facilitated by the seasonal nature of this form of entertainment, and Du Plessis had ensured that this "tradition" was entrenched. The season crept-in late in August - when choral practice

casually started - and petered out early in February, except when informal singing occurred at weddings or picnics, or entertainment had to be provided for ruling-class "dignitaries".<sup>30</sup> As president, Du Plessis, of course, limited his involvement to administration and publicity. He was never sufficiently gay to engage his vocal chords in "malay" ingenuity.<sup>31</sup> His perceptive powers were too busy seeking the institutionalization of his invented discipline - "malay studies". "Malay studies" would be the institutional and further material manifestation of the objective existence and presence of a distinctive "malay" subject and "culture".

In January 1944 Du Plessis began protracted correspondence with the Council and Senate of the University of Cape Town regarding the establishment of an "Institute of Malay Studies" or alternatively a "Department of Oriental Studies". Apart from his spurious credentials as "expert" on the "Cape Malays" Du Plessis was by this time a senior lecturer in the Department of Afrikaans en Nederlands for more than ten years - he had started in the Department in 1931. In its first annual report in 1944 the Coloured Advisory Council reported that it had initiated inquiries "to explore the possibilities" for a "Department of Oriental Studies" at UCT.<sup>32</sup> To the university authorities Du Plessis' recommendations were thus not unprecedented, though he, himself, urged the CAC to initiate the inquiries in the first place.<sup>33</sup> After Du Plessis' letter the UCT Council shelved the issue until further communication from the CAC sub-committee investigating the issue. The CAC was also to

confer with the Minister concerned, but no further CAC correspondence occurred.

In Du Plessis' first recommendation to the University Council he underlined the utility a "Department of Oriental Studies" would have for the "Cape Malays" and "Moslem Community."<sup>34</sup> Du Plessis now became interpreter of the needs of the "Moslem Community" in terms of his surveying position above the "community." But apart from the nebulous utilitarian value of Du Plessis' recommendations the nature and content of the programme of "studies" stood determined already. Du Plessis' 1944 recommendations advised the following:

In view of the needs of the Moslem community I wish to propose the creation of a Department of Oriental Studies, which would comprise two sections:

- A. Cape Malay Studies
- B. Arabic

Du Plessis only explained the possible content of section A

(it) would comprise courses in the history of the Malay race; the origin and history of the Cape Malay; folklore; current language; reading of Malay texts; and particularly, the Westernisation of the Cape Malay, Cape Town being a national centre for studying the intermingling of Eastern and Western Culture.<sup>35</sup>

Du Plessis' proposals reflect the ethnicist intellectual tradition he was reared in. It reflects no divergence from his earlier academic writings but instead seeks to provide institutional presence to his volkekunde. Du Plessis' vision was most probably also shaped by the developments in South African universities since the early 1920's. The liberal and Afrikaner universities had begun establishing Departments of Anthropology and Volkekunde respectively - to "understand

the native mind" - which had direct bearing on the social control of a massive African proletariat being urbanised permanently<sup>36</sup>. Though these departments in themselves, had only limited impact on the State's "native policy" the ideological functions of the institutionalised practice of Anthropology has been demonstrated. It defined a pluralist conceptual paradigm defining the

"native" as a discrete, separate and racially identifiable "cultural community." The terms in which this "cultural community" was construed necessitated that Africans would have to develop along their own lines.<sup>37</sup>

Du Plessis envisaged himself in a similar vocation as a Radcliffe-Brown or Lestrade.<sup>38</sup> But the "malays" were not as important as Africans in the South African political economy. By 1944 Du Plessis' "malays" numbered just over 30 000 and, moreover, they were basically confined to the Western Cape as a more settled working-class. By that time too Du Plessis was the only "fieldworker" journeying amongst the "malays" and was almost singularly generating material and ideas about the subject. But this in itself was not uncommon. As Robert Thornton has shown, often the "generators of raw materials and the manufacturers of ethnology were ... combined in the same persons" at the moment when "researching" a specific "other" culture was in its incipient stages.<sup>39</sup>

The only advance for Du Plessis' lobby at UCT by 1948 was the Senate's approval for the appointment of an "honorary organiser in Malay studies."<sup>40</sup> The Board of the Faculty of Arts then also reported to the Senate on the establishment of a "Department of Oriental Studies".<sup>41</sup> Combining Du

Plessis' recommendations with those of the CAC the Report is indicative of an anthropological discourse that had become almost universal currency in the academe. Point three of the report, as quoted by Du Plessis, states

The committee considers that an important task for the proposed Department of Arabic Civilization and Islam would be to organise intensive research into the life of the Cape Malays. Such a research programme should cover the history of the people; their language, social life, rituals... and other special cultural characteristics; their relations social and social status; their health and physique; their relations with other Coloured people and their position in the general life of the Western Province. The present fieldwork would have to be carried out with the aid of a small team of ... professional fieldworkers trained respectively in History, Afrikaans, Social Anthropology, Social Science, Human Biology, and Music.<sup>42</sup> (emphasis added)

As ambitious as the project seemed it was, however, never realised. And Du Plessis, with a grant of 550 pounds, remained "organiser" of the nebulous "Malay Studies" programme at UCT. With his penchant for the exotic and romantic Du Plessis investigated "Cape Malay Folklore" with the research grant. "Folklore" was chosen above the vast terrain of study the Faculty Board recommended. Yet the vastness of the area was ultimately distilled into a few reductive categories such as the "oriental mind", "malay mentality" or "their religion". (Note the references to "the history of the people", "their language", "special cultural characteristics", "their health and physique" and "Human Biology" in the recommendations)

If Du Plessis' fervour for "oriental" or "malay studies" was phlegmatically received by UCT then so were other attempts

(In 1929 already 1000 pounds were allocated by Sulaiman Shah Mohammad for a "Department of Oriental Studies"). The liberal South African Institute for Race Relations bemoaned the fact that no "Oriental Studies" department had yet been established at a South African university. In the SAIRR's "Handbook on Race Relations", David Lewis, the liberal "expert" on the "Cape Malays", wrote in 1949

Whereas all the great institutions of Europe, Britain, and America support departments of Oriental study, there is no such department at any of the South African universities. The inclusion of Oriental studies in the curriculum offered to students is urgently needed, not only to promote the education of the Malays. The fact that material for such study is so readily available is a further incentive.<sup>43</sup>

Lewis' motivation derived from the fact that "the West" was busy studying "the Other" and therefore South Africa should follow suit. South Africa, according to the liberal weltanschauung, stood on the western side of "the West-and-the-Rest complex", to use Johannes Fabian's phrase.<sup>44</sup>

The imperialist metropolises - "Europe, Britain and America" - occupy the logical pole towards which South African academe should gravitate. And in this respect moreso because "material" is actually available and "orientals" - who could benefit from an education about their Orient - are, in any case, part of the population. Had an institution been established Du Plessis' and Lewis' conception of the purposes and content of "Oriental Studies" would have differed only in detail. A positivist and empirist methodology - as expressed in the Faculty Boards' recommendations, for instance - was the standard baggage of social

inquiry prevalent in South Africa (and the West) in the post- World War II years, though Du Plessis' romantic "transcendalist" interest in "Malay Magic" and the "under-world" was his trade-mark.

While ruling-class intellectuals were debating the virtues and possibilities for institutionalized orientalism popular cultural institutions moulded and spontaneously mobilised the cultural energy and resources of inner-city dwellers in Cape Town. The Cape Malay Choir Board steadily accumulated membership to its fold. With a membership of 26 "teams" in 1945 and each consisting of between thirty to forty members the Board easily had the active participation of more than a thousand men in any of its concerts. Around each "team" gravitated a network of households of supporters potentially incorporating the whole of the Bo-Kaap and Onder-Kaap (as District Six was known, in relation to Bo-Kaap). A District Six resident of the time still vividly remembers the Choirs:

I tell you, when we were little we would follow them to wherever they went ... we would try to get near to them and walk with them. They sang close up to us, when we were on the pavement there ... I wanted to touch those smart red blazers and their white tackies. They was something really beautiful. They wasn't faraway on the radio, they was here, they was our choirs, singing for us"<sup>45</sup>

The women - wives, mothers, sisters and admirers - were not only the most avid supporters, they also proved their ability in the production of homemade cuisine for after-concert consumption or for street selling as a contribution to the precarious household economies so often encountered in District Six and the Bo-Kaap. In economic terms the

tailors benefitted most from the Choir Board's existence. Independent tailors or members of the Malay Tailors' Association and the Bespoke Tailors' Association (created by Du Plessis) were assured of at least one "team's" patronage per year. Tailors were often themselves involved in the Choirs Board's activities; such as Mr A Rossier who was a "composer" and coach in his heyday in the 1940s'.<sup>46</sup> The Choir Board thus generated a popular cultural activity and could not but gloss-over the social dislocations spawned by a capitalist political economy; and with close ruling-class connections at leadership level Choral-singing was, in the final analysis, a form of social control. It was certainly part of a wider process through which the ruling-class struggled to achieve what Gramsci has called a "hegemonic situation", i.e. one in which

a kind of permanent alliance exists; where a general solidarity between oppressors and oppressed has developed, with cultural processes reinforcing the political and economic domination of the ruling group.<sup>47</sup>

As Commissioner for Coloured Affairs from 1952 Du Plessis was in a materially advanced position, compared to his part-time affair in the Choir Board, to contribute even better to the hegemonic practices of the ruling-class. When the CAC was established in 1943, amidst opposition and struggle in the Western Cape, the Choir Board remained "neutral". It was defined as a "cultural" organisation in the narrow sense and was constrained from making the connections between "culture" and "politics". But the Board was not a homogeneous institution. The disaffection by some choirs from the Board in 1952 when Du Plessis forced the Van Riebeeck Festival upon them reflects both the depth of

popular discontent and Du Plessis' underestimation of the political consciousness of Choir members. Vigorous campaigning against the Festival by the Unity Movement (NEUM), the Anti-Cad and the Moslem Teachers' Association furthermore advanced a context for breaking the silent consent in the Board and Du Plessis' dominance.

By the late nineteenth century then the "Nederlanse-liedties" had become an "inherent" element of popular culture in the Bo-Kaap. Du Plessis came to transform a phenomenon that was widespread among the underclasses but that may even have disappeared slowly with minimal notice. But Du Plessis' transformation could not have been so radical as to have destroyed its basis in popular consciousness. The "Malay Choirs" a la Du Plessis thus emerged as a form of popular culture with an "inherent" presence in the Bo-Kaap-District Six matrix intertwined with elements "derived" from outside.<sup>48</sup> The "derived" elements such as the new mode of organisation, standardized forms of dress, competition, and adjudication by outsiders were distilled with the "inherent" elements to form a "tradition". Without reducing a broader dynamic that may have operated it was Du Plessis' specific political and intellectual location that dictated the fixity of the "tradition" of "Malay music." The business of the invention of traditions is the creation of fixity and invariance especially in times when things fall apart.<sup>49</sup> Thus, politically and otherwise Du Plessis' "Cape Malay Choir Board's" tenor was conservative.

To suggest that Du Plessis had a pre-determined programme of re-inventing "the malay", and that he struggled unceasingly

for its realisation is tempting. But historical process is filled with contradictions, ambivalence and unevenness; a neat concatenation of events thus should not be predicated on the past. However, as if to materially consolidate the gains of "malayness" Du Plessis started in 1943 to canvass for the "preservation" of "The Malay Quarter" and for a "Malay Museum" in this locality. Under the auspices of "The Group Working for the Preservation of the Malay Quarter" consisting of "prominent South Africans" such as Governor-General E.G. Jansen, artist Ruth Prowse and Chief Justice Watermeyer and with the endorsement of the Historical Monuments Commission the "Malay Quarter" was to be "protected" from threatened demolition. In 1934 this area was proclaimed a slum in terms of the Slums Act of 1934.<sup>50</sup> The housing shortage, over-crowding and high rents caused no disturbance to the landlords, property-owners and local State. What was important was the reproduction of labour, and declaring the area a slum was a facile way of attending to living conditions without cost.<sup>51</sup> Genuine liberal concern was articulated at local State level but no change in living conditions occurred, and throughout the 1940s':

The Malay Quarter presents a sad sight of decay and disintegration. The responsibility for these conditions cannot be ascribed to the Cape Malay himself. The number of Malay-owned properties is negligible. In fact, it is safe to say that the whole area is privately owned by speculators, who collect the rents and are not concerned with the condition of the houses on their properties<sup>52</sup>

While the living conditions were fast deteriorating Du Plessis and his group of "prominent South Africans" lobbied for the aesthetic preservation of the locality. Du Plessis had the extra-aesthetic motivation of preserving the

materiel of "malay" ethnicity. To Du Plessis

these small houses, single-storied and with backyards, were eminently suitable for the Malay way of living - until overcrowding set in<sup>53</sup>

The "malays" were constituted as "good-subjects" in Du Plessis' discourse as against "the natives" - the "bad subjects." Thus the condition "in the locality was due to the natives". Structural causes were not grasped and Du Plessis' explanation is ultimately pathological. As he argues:

the deterioration of this area is due mainly to the influx of natives and others who are not Malays<sup>54</sup>

To crown Du Plessis' efforts the Bo-Kaap was declared a "Group Area for Malays" in terms of the Group Areas Act of 1950. The "Malay Quarter" part of the Bo-Kaap with its "malay museum" was arbitrarily given boundaries by Du Plessis. Du Plessis' "picturesque and colourful part of Old Cape Town"

includes Chiappini Street and Rose Street with their connecting lanes and cross-streets extending from Wale Street at one end to Strand Street at the other<sup>55</sup>

Du Plessis here clinically maps out the territory "imminently suited for the Malay way of living" and defines its boundaries. Boundaries, where they exist, are constantly in flux and are more administrative inventions than "ethnically" appropriated locations (Apartheid social engineering since 1948, of course, enforced "ethnic" boundaries). The fluid nature of relations in the Bo-Kaap was expressed by The Torch in 1952:

The district is at present populated by Moslems, Coloureds, Indians, Africans and Europeans.<sup>56</sup>

And Du Plessis and his group implicitly acknowledged this in

1943 already - observe "the influx of the natives and others" in their explanation of the deterioration of the area. But as elusive a concept as "community" is, and the fact that critical Anthropologists have argued that "communities in any ethnographically meaningful sense do not exist"<sup>57</sup> fixing the "malays" geographically was invaluable to Du Plessis' discourse. Du Plessis attempted to have Macassar, near Faure, also passed as a "malay" Group Area in 1953 because it was historically linked to Shaykh Yusuf - Du Plessis' "founder of Islam in South Africa". Even though Macassar was "sandy, bushy, partly waterlogged", as Du Plessis admitted, he nonetheless speculated in good faith that it may become "highly desirable" in the future.<sup>58</sup>

What becomes manifest is Du Plessis' political project to represent the "malays" and present "them" as "different" and occupying a materially distinct locale. Thus not only was there a burgeoning pseudo-anthropological literature but also material representations of the subject. The Choir Board and Du Plessis' plethora of inconsequential "malay" organisations (eg. The Cape Malay League, Kaapse Maleier Bond and The Cape Malay Vigilance Committee), the "Malay Quarter" and its Museum all contributed to the construction of a unified malay subject. There may even have existed an academic sub-discipline for "them". Thus the representation amounts to what Edward Said has called a "discursive consistency",

one that has not only history but material (institutional) presence to show for itself.

Furthermore,

such a consistency was a form of cultural praxis ... (which operated) as repre-

sentations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting<sup>59</sup>

And the purpose for which "malay otherness" operated was to maintain a divid et imperia policy in a local setting. The specific setting was white racial domination and capitalist accumulation in a late and forced industrializing economy; yet a context shaped by worker and popular struggles generated from below (especially since the late-forties). Du Plessis' vocation was to disarm popular culture from remaining "alternative" and becoming oppositional, and contribute to the emasculation of the underclasses of Cape Town. In the C.A.D. - from 1951 to 1962 - Du Plessis continued his role with full institutional backing, but even then he did not proceed unchallenged.

#### Footnotes

1. A Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture" in Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral, p.46
2. T. Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa" in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (ed), The Invention of Tradition, p.250
3. Du Plessis' doctoral thesis was published in 1935 as "Die Bydrae van Die Kaapse Maleier tot die Afrikaanse Volkslied."
4. Interview with Mrs A. Schroeder, 13/11/86, Walmer Estate. She is the great grand-daughter of Abatti and a proud malay friend of Du Plessis.
5. See Du Plessis, Die Bydrae van die Kaapse Maleier tot die Afrikaanse Volkslied, p.36
6. G. Manuel, Kampvegters, p.65
7. *ibid*, p.66
8. "Manenberg se Trein" is a contemporary example and an early example would be "Beste Pote", a popular working-class "delicacy" at the time.

9. The Cape Argus, 5/1/1897
10. See The Cape Argus, 5, 7 and 9/1/1897
11. See Du Plessis, op cit, p.36 and Manuel, op cit, p.62
12. I.D. Du Plessis and C.A. Luckhoff, The Malay Quarter and its People, p.44
13. See Manuel's Kampvegters
14. Die Huisgenoot, 28/2/36, p.43
15. I.D. Du Plessis, Aantekenige uit Tuynstraat, p.62
16. Discussion with an historian of Muslims in Cape Town and the Bo-Kaap, A. Davids, 6/1/87, Bo-Kaap
17. Du Plessis, op cit, p.68
18. In 1945 Du Plessis' "Tales from the Malay Quarter" appeared. "Uit Die Slamse Buurt" (two volumes) by him appeared about the same time.
19. For an exhaustive survey of "coloured" politics in the pre-second World War period see G. Lewis, "The Reactions of the Cape Coloureds to Segregation, 1900 - 1948." unpublished Ph D thesis, Queens University, Canada, 1984.
20. For details see A. Davids, Politics and the Muslims of Cape Town: A Historical Survey in "Studies in the History of Cape Town", 4, 1984
21. The Sun, 2/3/34
22. See The Sun, 2/2/34 and 12/10/34 respectively.
23. Dr Abdurahman of the APO was part of the organization of this event. See The Sun, 10/5/35.
24. Du Plessis, Aantekeninge Uit Tuynstraat, p.66
25. ibid, p.66
26. Cape Malay Choir Board Brochure: "Europe Tour" - July 1984. No pagination.
27. The Ottoman Fez (Kufiyah) was only introduced to Cape Town in 1862 when Abubakr Effendi, the Ottoman teacher-cleric, arrived there.
28. E.Hobsbawm, introduction to E.Hobsbawm and T.Ranger (ed), op cit, p.4
29. The Cape Standard, 30/01/45.
30. In "Aantekeninge Uit Tynstraat", p.65 Du Plessis writes that when the Earl of Clarendon was Governor-General, he arranged a concert at Tuynhys. Parliamentarians, General Smuts and Hertzog and others were there

entertained to a moppie and ghommaliédjtjie or two, Du Plessis took a "team" to the "Owl Club", in 1938, to entertain the gentlemen at the Club.

31. Gay, Du Plessis may have been, as oral reports indicate and other reliable sources (such as a colleague). But he never made a spectacle of himself to march with the "malays" who attracted him so much. The furthest he came was to suggest that Bennie Osler sing at a concert (from Mrs A.Schroeder).
32. UG 28-1944, First Annual Report of the Coloured Advisory Council, therefore 1st April 1943 to March 1944; p.6. Mr Salie Dollie, formerly of the Cape Malay Association, was then Vice-Chairmen of the CAC for the Cape Province.
33. See the note to his letter to UCT in the Appendix of UCT Council Minutes 31/1/44. For the opportunity to search the UCT institutional archives thanks go to Mr Preston of the UCT Administration and Dr Howard Phillips, Department of History, UCT.
34. UCT Council minutes, 31/01/44, Appendix, p.2830
35. *ibid*
36. See S.Dubow, "Understanding the Native Mind": The Impact of Anthropological Thought an Segregationist Discourse in South Africa, 1919-1933" Unpublished paper
37. *ibid*, p2
38. Radcliffe-Brown held the first chair in the "Department of African Life and Languages" at UCT from 1921 - "the first of its kind in the world". G.P.Lestrade was the first State ethnologist, as part of the Native Affairs Department, in 1925 (Dubow, *ibid*, p.10 and note 22)
39. R.Thornton, "Narrative Ethnography in Africa, 1850-1920: the Creation and Capture of an Appriate Domain for Anthropology" in MAN, 18, 1983, p.516.
40. UCT Senate Minutes, 13/4/48.
41. *ibid*
42. Du Plessis' letter to Senate in Senate Minutes, 1/3/48. References are again made to the film on the "Cape Malays" According to the Council minutes of 27/8/45, p.2986, the University accepted the film from Du Plessis, and the UCT SRC was approached to donate towards the cost of the film. Thus far, it has been impossible to trace the film. Further study may deconstruct the iconography and discourse of the "ethnographic film" if it is found.
43. D.Lewis, "Religion of the Cape Malays" in Hellman, E and Abrahams, L (ed), Handbook on Race Ralations in South Africa, P.597

44. J.Fabian, Time and The Other, p.53
45. Oral report quoted in B.Nasson, "She preferred living in a cage with Harry the snake-catcher". Towards an Oral History of Popular Leisure and Class Expression in District Six, Cape Town, c. 1920s'-1950s' (Draft copy) p.30
46. Interview with Mr A.Rossier, 18/11/86, Salt River.
47. Gramsci, as quoted in Bozzoli(ed), Town and Countryside in The Transvaal, p.18
48. On the dialectic of "inherent" and "derived" dimensions of culture see G.Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, p.28 ff.
49. See Hobsbawm's introductory essay in Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (ed), op.cit, ppl-14.
50. See A.Davids, Mosques of The Bo-Kaap, p.12
51. It took the municipality almost 20 years to start restoration work in the area, see ibid, p.14
52. D.Lewis in Hellman, E. and Abrahams, L. (ed), op cit. p.597.
53. I.D.Du Plessis, The Cape Malays, p.79
54. The Malay Quarter - Case for Preservation (Pamphlet) p.2
55. ibid, p.1
56. The Torch 3/6/52.
57. R.Thornton, "'On Pig's Wing's'": The reality of 'Community'" unpublished paper, p.13
58. See The Torch, 24/3/53.
59. E.Said, Orientalism, p.273

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### FROM ADMIRATION TO ADMINISTRATION:

#### DU PLESSIS IN THE COLOURED AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT, 1951 - 1962

"Dr du Plessis is none other than the man who has been the moving spirit behind the 'choirs' in Cape Town, and through his prodigious efforts on behalf of 'Malay Culture', he has almost succeeded in raising 'Janawarrie, Febarwarrie, Maatjich, April, May, June, Julaa' to the status of a national anthem.

Like all the other great friends of the Non-Europeans, Dr du Plessis has now been given an opportunity by the Government to use his special interest in the Non-Europeans to assist the working-out of segregation for them."<sup>1</sup>

"What we must reckon with is a long and slow process of appropriation by which ... awareness of the Orient transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into being administrative, economic and even military."<sup>2</sup>

When in March 1951 Dr Du Plessis moved from UCT to the Coloured Affairs Department State policy was being deployed with a remarkable degree of coherence. It was barely three years after the National Party came to power and State apparatuses were rapidly engineering Apartheid policies, though not without contradiction and inconsistency. A case in point is the agricultural and commercial Capitalist fractions' lobby for "controlled" African urbanization whilst Afrikaner ideologues in SABRA postured around a policy of total urban segregation. In the central State and Native Affairs Department these positions were contested. The Coloured Affairs Department, to an extent, also became a site where these issues were contested.<sup>3</sup>

The Coloured Affairs Department was created to structure and

implement State policy regarding "coloureds" and "malays" who were overwhelmingly located in the Western Cape. Thus the thrust of the Department's activities was in the Cape region.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it was State policy to rigidly structure labour in the region in terms of a Coloured Labour Preference Policy. Although this policy was explicitly stated by the Minister of Native Affairs, Verwoerd, in 1954 the reality was that the Western Cape had already been designated, albeit unofficially, as an area for Coloured preference early in the twentieth Century. Goldin<sup>5</sup> has shown that by 1923 the Cape Town City Council argued that

Cape Town possessed its own reservoir of labour in the coloured community

and the government was accused of not controlling the influx of Africans to Cape Town. In 1943 the Coloured Advisory Council, predecessor of the Coloured Affairs Department, enthusiastically praised the strict influx control measures of General Smuts. The seriousness with which the National Party wished to implement influx control in the Western Cape is reflected in the 1696 Africans who were forcibly replaced by 1290 Whites and 406 Coloureds in 1949. Since then a barrage of legislation was passed affecting influx control.<sup>6</sup>

The Coloured Affairs Department articulated policies for the social control of "coloureds" in this context of African labour control.<sup>7</sup> The Coloured Affairs Department and the Native Affairs Department therefore of necessity had close co-operation. The aims of the CAD necessitated such co-operation as Du Plessis stated in 1953:

One of the main tasks which the Division of Coloured Affairs has set itself, is to bring about separation between Coloureds and Natives. Many of the evils

resulting from the intermixing of the two races will therefore be overcome.<sup>8</sup>

Significantly, it was the Native Affairs Department that promulgated and administered the Coloured Labour Preference Policy<sup>9</sup> while the Coloured Affairs Department articulated itself in the ideologically mystified "interests of the Coloured people." However, contradictions between local industrial and manufacturing Capital and the State surfaced as certain industries relied on Africans for heavy manual labour. The ideological imperatives of the State in this instance forced these fractions of Capital to structure production in terms of the new conditions. To Capital, the Coloured Affairs Department may not initially have been significant but it was charged with important tasks of articulating policies of social control and reproduction - areas of vital importance to the reproduction of classes and class relations, and ensuring stable conditions of production. Capital, of course, has its own mechanisms for engendering stable conditions for production. A placid working-class constituted as "coloureds" and "malays" different from each other and Africans was a boon to Capital - and the Coloured Affairs Department attempted to ensure just this. Moreover, the Coloured Affairs Department was administering institutions supplying industry with skilled and semi-skilled labour.<sup>10</sup> Thus, whereas the Native Affairs Department was attempting to keep Africans out of Cape Town, the Coloured Affairs Department attempted to keep Coloureds employed in this region at a cheap rate. Thus the supply of skilled and semi-skilled Coloured labour to industries was at a wage rate lower than for the same White labour.<sup>11</sup>

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The broad context in which the Coloured Affairs Department was founded has been traced but before turning to aspects of its social control function the dynamics of the Department itself needs explication. As a State apparatus it tried to articulate an ideology of neutrality to mystify its political purpose. Thus Du Plessis issued a press statement that

The sole test in making any recommendation to the Government will be what steps are necessary in the interests of the Coloured community, and of efficiency.<sup>12</sup>

The discourse is that of social responsibility and technocracy ("interests of the Coloured Community" and "efficiency") But the struggle of the Coloured Affairs Department to constitute itself as such, in subordinating the "coloureds" and "malays" did not go unchallenged. In fact campaigning by the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (Anti-CAD) had presented the Coloured Affairs Department as fraudulent even before it was formally established.<sup>13</sup> Du Plessis was acutely aware of this,<sup>14</sup> yet he planned to invert this image of the Coloured Affairs Department. One of his first moves then was to de-segregate the civil service by employing "coloureds" in the Coloured Affairs Department. From an exiguous base of 3 in the employ of the Coloured Affairs Department human resources grew to 361 in 1959, of whom 63% were "coloureds".<sup>15</sup> Du Plessis tried to manipulate his relations with "malays" in his "malay" organisations to staff the Coloured Affairs Department but very few opted, or had the qualifications, to join the Coloured Affairs Department. Ebrahim Schroeder, cabinet-maker and chairman of the Cape Malay Choir Board at the time was one of the first

few employees in the Coloured Affairs Department in 1953. Du Plessis' scheme entailed the construction of a benevolent "own" institution for "coloureds" exemplified in the novel employment of "coloureds" and the political co-optation of members of the middle-layer socio-economic elite through the civil service. Thus youth who visited the local labour Bureau for employment had to fill out forms for possible employment in the Coloured Affairs Department.<sup>16</sup> Schroeder was joined in the Coloured Affairs Department by an ex-Policeman, Tommy Carse, whose role in the Coloured Affairs Department was derogatively described in *The Torch* as "Minister of Sport, Carnivals and Circuses."<sup>17</sup> Yeld, government liason officer with the CAC since 1943, Kempen from the Department of Lands, and a former magistrate D.J. Bosman had by 1953 constituted the Coloured Affairs Department core. The "Coloureds" were employed as lower order clerks and "research officers" but there was widespread suspicion and rejection of those who worked in the Coloured Affairs Department. A liberal scholar, Sheila Patterson, observed at the time when Du Plessis made his most avid attempts to recruit "Coloureds", that:

So far this project has evoked little enthusiasm amongst most Coloured people; the former CAC supporters have united with the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department group to denounce any Coloured person who might take up such a post as a quisling.<sup>18</sup>

In far less scholarly manner *the Torch* wrote in October 1953 that

The Coloured Affairs Department has as some of its herd of police trap-boys spies who lurk in and out of various Non-European organisations.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, Du Plessis suggested to the Commissioner of Police

in 1951 that more "Coloureds" should be employed as policemen.<sup>20</sup> But a more concealed passage for co-optation was the patronage relationship that Du Plessis developed. An instance is the numerous "Marriage Officers", "Commissioners of Oaths" and "Justices of the Peace" created since 1952. Ten years later Du Plessis could report<sup>21</sup>

Commissioners of Oaths and Justices of Peace .....	125
Marriage Officers .....	89

Oral evidence suggests that even the most perfunctory visit to the local police station was viewed with suspicion.

Du Plessis' colleague in the Coloured Affairs Department, Mr A. V. Kempen recalled that

you could go to the police station but you know ... people are not always keen to go. You know what's it like ... if your friends see you going to the police station they say there must be something wrong ... Doctor (Du Plessis) said, that is one thing where we got (to get) dependable coloured people ... (Being a Commissioner of Oaths) was also a symbol of status. It gives a person self-confidence and enhances a person's authority in his community.<sup>22</sup>

Not as a direct consequence, but certainly connected to this image of the police were "dependable" "coloured" and "malay" officials recruited to perform certain legal functions from their homes. "Status", "self-confidence" and "authority" were apparently the social gains for such "officers." Usually it was confirmed collaborators who opted for these jobs.<sup>23</sup> But here was another instance through which hegemonic ideology came to be articulated: "coloureds" served "coloureds" and "naturally" laboured for whites in an otherwise "free" State. And it was inside the Coloured Affairs bureaucracy that committed bearers of hegemonic ideology were prepared in the process of everyday work.<sup>24</sup>

If the Department was an agency for social control it also generated a diverse set of institutional mechanisms. The pre-eminent institution for the legitimation of class control, of course, was the educational system but the other agencies in civil society should not be overlooked. The "ethical function" of the State, according to Gramsci, is extended beyond

the school as a positive education function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function which are the most important State activities in this sense: but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end-initiatives and activities which form the apparatus, of the political and cultural hegemony of the the ruling classes.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the Coloured Affairs Department's initiatives in "cultural", vocational and recreational spheres assumed a political function. At the same SABRA conference in 1955 where Eiselen and Verwoed's notorious "native policy" was declared Du Plessis expounded his theory of leisure and culture:

Recreation constitutes an essential element in all classes of society. It is particularly necessary for a people that feels, rightly or wrongly, that is not being accorded its rightful place in the community<sup>26</sup>

Du Plessis had already succeeded in directing the "malay choirs" but the spontaneity and range of popular cultural expressions were far from being emasculated. The ruling-class was aware of the discontent and the concomitant forms of underclass expression as forms of resistance to their authority. For example, certain areas of District Six at the time were "no-go" areas for police, and the uncontrollable

Coon Carnival "was driven off the streets and into stadiums" as a means of control.<sup>27</sup> More harmful to production and control were the consequences of the consumption of alcohol by workers. Of the "problem of drunkenness" the Coloured Affairs Department complained and made recommendations to other institutions but it was ineffective in solving the problem.<sup>28</sup> But far more creative action was taken in preparing "coloured" youth for "leadership".

In 1952 the Coloured Affairs Department created a "National Association for Vocation Courses for Coloureds" (NAVAC). With a State grant of 1,000 pounds the first camp was organised and since that first camp in January 1953 annual camps and other "courses" were organised.<sup>29</sup> Whilst the camp had a sports orientation ruling-class ideology was filtered down and the "benefits" of the Coloured Affairs Department were peddled. The first camp had 183 participants and the Klaasjagersberg site, near Simonstown, became a permanent venue. But after this numbers dwindled even though the Coloured Affairs Department involved the Eoan Group - a State-aided drama association for "Coloureds" - and the Western Province Association of Physical Education and advertised that Danie Craven, "Swiss Athletes" and "six rugby Springboks" would be coaching. Du Plessis also used old associates, such as Salie Dollie of the disbanded CMA and CAC, to canvass support for the camps in their spheres of influence. In the case of Salie Dollie, he was to recruit "malays" to the camps and liaise with rugby clubs in Bo-kaap. But the sporting clubs - especially rugby and football - refused to collaborate with the Coloured Affairs Department. The suspicion with which Du Plessis and the

Coloured Affairs Department was treated was politically advanced by the campaigns of the Anti-CAD. The concealed political purposes of the NAVAC and Coloured Affairs Department's latest leisure discourse was consistently exposed by popular organisations. An article in The Torch of February 1953 captures the role of the Coloured Affairs Department in its newest disguise

Let the people be warned. The Coloured Affairs Department was not established to teach the Coloured people how to play ball better. The Coloured Affairs Department is a political department that has to perpetuate the political myths of political representation of the million Coloured people. The Coloured Affairs Department does not want sporting supporters. It wants potential Quislings, but it works under the cloak of cultural activities and sport.<sup>30</sup>

Gramsci's "other so-called private initiatives" reproducing hegemonic ideology is a characterization in which countless other official and liberal organisations and strategies can be slotted. The Coloured Affairs Department was thus not alone. A range of institutions, from the radio and press to welfare organisations served ruling-class purposes in the final analysis, complementing each other in a complex way. For instance, The Sun was a newspaper specifically for "coloureds" since the 1930s', and CAFDA a welfare organisation for "coloureds". Du Plessis, of course, had excellent relations with both. But he was also forced to manipulate his way into gaining active collaboration from certain other organisations. In 1959, for example, Du Plessis moved to co-opt the Silvertree Boys Club and succeeded only after a protracted struggle and through applying financial leverage.<sup>31</sup> Earlier in the Coloured

Affairs Department's existence it began performing welfare tasks already performed by other institutions. Using the Coloured Affairs Department thus became a necessity. A definite political end was attached to this, concealed under Du Plessis' discourse of "social responsibility". The Torch observed that

The Coloured Affairs Department is trying desperately to break the sustained boycott by the Coloured people, and is using the issue of health to achieve its end of segregating the Coloured people.<sup>32</sup>

By the time Du Plessis became head of the Coloured Affairs Department he had almost a twenty year acquaintance with the "malays" through the Choir Board he created in 1939. Thus he continued to have access to at least some "malays". In 1951, as a key member of the commission investigating "Woordomskrywing en Klassifikasie van Nie-Blankes" Du Plessis attempted a better definition of "Cape Malay" than the existing one which defined a "Malay" as "any person who states that he is a Cape Malay, unless and until the contrary is proved."<sup>33</sup> By the same time the category "Cape Malays" for the last time appeared as a separate category in the population census. The 1951 census recorded<sup>34</sup>

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Cape Malays	30 447	32 155	62 602
Other Coloureds	509 835	506 184	1 016 019
	-----	-----	-----
	540 282	538 339	1 078 621
	-----	-----	-----

Du Plessis and the Coloured Affairs Department directed their activities at this group. The "malays" were not treated separately though Du Plessis may have wanted to

maintain them separately. Yeld expressed the situation slightly more disinterestedly than Du Plessis when he observed that

... while in many respects a separate community or sub-group, the Cape Malays are for economic and political purposes, as well as by reason of descent, so closely linked with the Coloured community that for practical purposes they may be defined as "Muslim Coloureds".<sup>35</sup>

Whether defined as "Muslim Coloureds" or "Cape Malays" Du Plessis created incentives for collaboration by some "malays" and had a base in the Choir Board to incorporate some "malays". The Board Chairman's appointment in the Coloured Affairs Department was already noted. Through the Choir Board, Du Plessis also tried to involve the "malays" in the Van Riebeeck festival in 1952 but met with strong opposition. Then Du Plessis also made arrangements with a shipping company to reserve accommodation for "intending Moslem pilgrims" and arrangements for the slaughter of sheep during the Muslim "Festival of Sacrifice" (Eid-ul-Adha).<sup>36</sup> And, indeed, Du Plessis found a few collaborators as the Van Riebeeck festival proved. He was honoured guest at the Habibibia Kokanie Educational Institute bazaar and one organised by the Cape of Good Hope Islamic Society and other such local functions.<sup>37</sup> It seems that it was the Muslim clerisy that was most enamoured by Du Plessis as Coloured Affairs Department chief. Confounded by his ability to provide concessions for "the faith" the clerics opted for Du Plessis instead of the constrained popular organizations that offered nothing for "the faithful". Thus at the height of opposition to Du Plessis Shaykh A. Behardien, President of the Muslim Judicial Council, had an equivocal position

on the Coloured Affairs Department's publication "The Malay Quarter and its People".<sup>38</sup> There are reports of the invention of the rite of visiting Du Plessis in the Coloured Affairs Department offices on the day of the Festival marking the end of the Fast (Eid-ul-Fitr). In June 1954 a "group of nine Cape Malays" visited Du Plessis at the Coloured Affairs Department. Included was the leader of the "Madrassatul Islamia", a Shaykh Salamodin Davids, and the rest seems to have been Choir Board officials. The Cape Times reported the visit :

Mr Mogamat January told the Cape Times that the group represented that section of the Cape Malays who thought that their community were indebted to the Government, and particularly Dr. Du Plessis for uplifting them, and taking an interest in their affairs.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed there was a "section of the Cape Malays" which unequivocally held Du Plessis and the Coloured Affairs Department in holy esteem but even the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) of Shaykh A. Behardien - who was frequently visited by Du Plessis - developed a distanced position towards the Coloured Affairs Department. The Council, for instance, rejected "in toto" Du Plessis' "Malay Group Areas" scheme.<sup>40</sup> At the other end of the continuum stood youth and students in the Non-European Unity Movement, the Teachers League of South Africa, The Moslem Teachers Association and Imam Abdullah Haron's circle in Claremont. As fragmented and antagonistic to each other as these groupings at times were, the Coloured Affairs Department's project to protect the "malay" sub-culture never succeeded in winning their support. The "slow process of appropriation" by which awareness of the "malays" were transformed from being "textual" to "administrative" was not an unfettered process nor were

the "malays" fully appropriated as a distinct "administrative unit". The terrain on which the Coloured Affairs Department had to exercise its calling to social control was far more vast and complex. Du Plessis as bureaucrat had a wider terrain to manage<sup>41</sup> but as the Coloured Affairs Department's chief he could also advance the material conditions for the constitution of the "malay" subject. His proposed "Malay Group Areas" at Bo-Kaap and Macassar, near Faure, and "malay" presence at the Van Riebeeck festival are prime examples. But the Coloured Affairs Department was established at a time an anti-Apartheid discourse was in its formative stages and Du Plessis was conscious of the popular antagonism towards the Coloured Affairs Department. In such conditions of struggle the Coloured Affairs Department itself was transformed, and by 1958 a Minister of Coloured Affairs was appointed. P.W. Botha assumed this post and gradually Du Plessis was phased out until in 1962 he resigned but remained to be personal advisor to Botha as Minister of Coloured Affairs and Dr Donges as Minister of Interior.

Footnotes:

1. The Torch 13/2/51
2. E. Said, Orientalism, p.210
3. See D. Posel, "Coloured Labour Preference Policy during the 1950s' in the context of national policy on African urbanisation", unpublished paper
4. The Department's activities, however, included all areas where "coloureds" were located. The Transvaal for example was thus also its concern and so were those classified as "Griquas". The Department was initially named the "sub-Division of Coloured Affairs".
5. I. Goldin, "The Poverty of Coloured Labour Preference: Economics and Ideology in Action", p.6

6. Goldin, *ibid*, p.9
7. For this observation thanks to Andrew Merrifield of the Department of Political Studies, UCT (1986)
8. UG 13/1954, Report of the Commissioner, p.6
9. See Posel, *op cit*, for details and also W. van der Westhuizen's paper "The Poverty of the debate on the Coloured Labour Preference Policy: Ideology in Action."
10. See Van der Westhuizen, *op cit*.
11. The Torch 18/12/51 gives the example of the engineering industry's opening for "coloured" skilled labour, which Du Plessis applauded, but wages were lower for "coloureds" who performed the same work as the white workers.
12. Quoted in UG 45/1952, first Report of the Commissioner for Coloured Affairs for the year ended 31 March 1952, p.1
13. The Anti-CAD was named as such in 1943 already even though it was campaigning against the CAC. The founders of the Anti-CAD saw in it another NAD (Native Affairs Department) but for "coloureds".
14. Du Plessis notes the opposition in his first report, *op cit*, p. 5
15. Report of the Commissioner for Coloured Affairs, for the year ended 1959, p.1
16. The Torch, 26/6/51, p.4
17. The Torch 28/8/51, p.1
18. S. Patterson, *Colour and Culture in South Africa*, p.43
19. The Torch, 13/10/53
20. UG 45/1952, Report of the Commissioner, for year ended March 1952, p.13
21. UG 32/1960 Report for year ended 1961 p.2
22. Interview with Mr A.V. Kempen, 17/11/86, Bellville
23. For acid invective against an aspirant "Commissioner of Oaths" see The Torch, 14/7/53, p.8 A. Sadullah, later on the Coloured Representative Council, E. Schroeder and Shaykh I. Gamielien - Du Plessis' friends - were among the early C.O.'s
24. Mr Kempen, in the interview cited, talks warmly of "Chris April ... (who) made a very good impression (in the CAD)" and others who are today serving in the Tricameral and work the discredited management committees.

25. Quoted in A.S. Sasson, Gramsci's Politics, p.115
26. I.D. Du Plessis, "The Coloured People of South Africa: some aspects of their present position" in Die Kleurling in die Suid-Afrikaanse Samelewing, lectures delivered at the 6th annual meeting of the SABRA, p.22
27. D. Pinnock, The Brotherhoods, p.35. See also the paper by Pinnock, "Argie boys to skollie gangsters" the lumpen proletarian challenge of the street-corner armies of District Six, 1900 - 1951, CAS, UCT
28. See Reports of the Commissioner for 1952 and 1953 for the CAD's view on the drinking problem.
29. By 1958 the 7th course had been organized. See UG 32/1960, Report of the Commissioner for year ended 31st December 1958
30. The Torch, 17/2/53, p.8
31. See The Torch 26/1/60
32. The Torch, 31/3/53
33. Draft of the National Population Registration act in the Donges Collection, CA A 1646/126
34. UG 45/1952, Report of the Commissioner for year ended March 1952, p.15
35. R.W.A. Yeld, "The Coloured People: Some thoughts on their present position and on possible obstacles to future progress", unpublished paper, p.7
36. See UG 13/1954 Report of Commissioner for year ended 31st March 1953, p.5, and The Torch 18/9/51
37. See The Torch 20/3/51 and 8/5/51
38. See the Shaykh's letter to the Cape Times 24/05/54
39. Cape Times 4/06/54
40. See The Torch 17/11/53 on the anti-Group Areas meeting of the MJC. However, before the end of the meeting MJC speakers were still vacillating on the group areas issue.
41. As this study is not about the CAD itself as a State bureaucracy a fuller examination of the CAD may be undertaken in later research. The obvious silence in this chapter is about the CADs' rural and labour policy. Suffice it to say that by the end of 1952 the CAD started developing its rural section. Kempen, from the Department of Lands, thus joined the CAD in 1952 and especial attention was paid to the "coloured reserves" such as Steinkopf. Naturally, in the Northern Cape, the CAD started to police the boundaries of "Griqua ethnicity" and fine-combed these areas where

"others" such as "natives", were not "supposed" to be.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESPONSES FROM BELOW: DISARTICULATING THE MALAY SUBJECT

"Kollisch, De Roubaix, Du Plessis and their kind believe the Muslims are a docile, servile lot. They look on the Muslims with insolent contempt. The growing spirit of non-collaboration among the Muslims, their solidarity with the other Non-Europeans as shown in their break with Du Plessis' Choir Board and their boycott of the Festival Stadium - these facts show that there are hundreds of Toussaint L'Overtures among the Muslims, as there are likewise among the rest of the oppressed Non-Europeans."<sup>1</sup>

"The subject is thus the site of contradiction, and is consequently perpetually in the process of construction, thrown into crisis by alterations in language and in the social formation, capable of change. And in the fact that the subject is a process, lies the possibility of transformation."<sup>2</sup>

What will be shown here is that the articulatory practices of the leading forces in the liberatory movement were largely unsuccessful insofar as the "malay" subject was effectively disarticulated in the 1950s'. Rather, it was an incipient but amorphous Islamic movement that hailed a Muslim-subject, though not as a unified subject defined against the "people-nation" but rather defined against the "malay" subject which, as has been shown, the ruling-class in many ways created. It will be shown here that there was a qualitative organisational shift between 1952 and 1962 accompanying the articulation of an alternative subject. The subtleties of this shift can be observed in the responses to the Van Riebeeck Festival in 1952 and the response to Du Plessis and Luckhoff's book, "The Malay Quarter and its People" in 1954, and by May 1961 The Torch

and the then newly established Muslim News (founded December 1960) could report on a mass rally organized by the Claremont Muslim Youth Association, the Cape Muslim Youth Movement and other organisations. Cast in Islamic terms the discourse was popular-democratic, as a reading of the press reports of the meeting suggest.<sup>3</sup>

The 1950s' was a decade of decolonization in Colonial Africa. The immediate post World War II period witnessed nationalist movements articulate their causes far more robustly, and in the late 1950s' the process of decolonization started. As West and North African examples suggest new (national) subjects were constituted in the process of anti-colonial struggle. In South Africa the national liberation movement's populist strategies more than alarmed the ruling-class in the 1950s'. The Apartheid State was the focus of the attack, and populist strategies were deployed to radically change the form of State i.e to found a non-racial democratic State. But whereas populist discourse and practice articulated subjects as "people" - or South African people - ethnic subjects were not in all cases fully disarticulated.<sup>4</sup> For instance, the "malay" subject was not disarticulated by the "people" discourse, and likewise Indians were organized in their own congresses. The Cape Town-based Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) was at pains to "expose" this implicit "multi-national" position of the Congress Alliance.<sup>5</sup> In practice the "multi-national" position sought to organize constituencies in terms of the concrete conditions which obtained at a particular conjuncture. And, as is now known, "culture" and "ethnic"

fixity are not merely superstructural mystifications. These dimensions of the social formation assume a relevance beyond being mere distortions of material reality. If "ethnic" differences constituted part of the "objective conditions", according to the Congress Alliance, then it was implicit in the Unity Movement's political practice. Its federal structure meant that a Cape African Teachers' Association (CATA was based in the Transkei) operated alongside the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA was based in Cape Town). The Unity Movement, through its mouthpiece The Torch, sometimes appealed to (or warned) "malays", at other times to "Moslems" and at times to "all sections of the Non-Europeans"<sup>6</sup>

Popular political organizations thus addressed the preconstituted "malay" subject as "malay" though it attempted to propel this subject along a radically different course than that proposed by ruling-class forces. Those who preferred to be Muslims in the popular organisations took the process of disarticulating the "malay" subject further. This process was largely pursued outside the established popular organizations and assumed an organizational form from the mid-1950s'. Before examining this process and some of its more concrete manifestations it is necessary to consider the weight of the "malay" identity in popular consciousness by the time Du Plessis and Luckhoff's book "The Malay Quarter and its People" was published in 1953.<sup>7</sup>

Months before Du Plessis established the Cape Malay Choir Board the moribund Cape Malay Association declared at a

protest meeting against beach segregation

that this public meeting of Muslims do hereby steadfastly resolve to support the (Non-European) United Front against segregation and other forces of oppression.<sup>8</sup>

By this time the CMA had joined the NEUF (Non-European United Front) on behalf of all Muslims ("malays" and Indians and others). But by this time the CMA was at the nadir of its decline. The Choir Board was then the "malay" organisation. By the end of the Second World War a Muslim Judicial Council was established as a specifically religious forum for the clerisy and interested laymen.<sup>9</sup> The MJC generated Muslim support through the Shaykhs and Imams whose popularity was founded on their organic relation to the Muslims of their locality. Often these poor peoples' priests had to sell their labour, but generated extra income through a patronage relationship. Perceived as "geleerde mense" (Ulama') respect for their religious authority was materially expressed in cash or kind. Their role extended beyond ritual, custom and "invented tradition" to a social function that included counsellor, welfare officer and moral caretaker. Most of these Imams (leaders) constituted the 61 who attended the founding Conference of the MJC in February 1945. At the leadership end of the MJC were men such as Shaykh A.Gamiieldien, Shaykh A.Behardien and Shaykh M.S.Gamiieldien. ] It was not them who in the first instance conceived of a Judicial Council with a hierarchial structure divided into a Supreme Council and a general body. These men were gentlemen of an aspirant petty bourgeois class, and their relations with other men of their class provided the impulse for the establishemnt of a "judiciary". One such man was Dr Abdul-Rahim Abrahams, who founded a Moslem

Progressive Society soon after his return from Britain in 1941. It was this organisation that urged the establishment of a Judicial Council.

One of the recommendations of the MJC's founding Conference was

to register the ... Judicial Council in order to ensure recognition by the Government.<sup>10</sup>

The Council was never registered but its aspiration for State recognition prevented it from ever being harshly critical of the State until the early sixties and likewise it never disarticulated the "malay" subject the ruling-class had constructed. This is partly explained by the ideological and class background of the MJC's leadership. Shaykh A.Behardien, regarded as the "Chief Priest", resided in Walmer Estate, on the better edges of District Six. Oral evidence reveals that Du Plessis was a regular guest of the Shaykh. Shaykh M.S.Gamiieldien, was of a fortunate family who emmigrated to Egypt in the 1930s'. There he was trained at the conservative, but respected, Al Azhar University. When his father, 'Shaykh A.K.Gamiieldien, died The Sun described him as one "ardent supporter of the Nationalist government and a member of the (Afrikaner) Bond."<sup>11</sup> The young Gamiieldien was similarly a friend of Du Plessis and the CAD when it was established. By 1953 the MJC could both reject the State's "Malay Group Areas" initiative and claim to be a non-political body. As senior MJC members, Hadj Du Toit and Shaykh M.G.Booley - "Private Lecturer in Theology and the Arabic language" - presented evidence to the Commission on the Separate Representation of Voters' Act in

January 1954. Booley was questioned about the November 1953 meeting where the "Malay Group Areas" was rejected

And were any political discussions introduced?

Booley replied

No. A few people tried to introduce politics but because the meeting was convened by the Muslim Judicial Council which is a strictly non-political body, the Chairman, Sheikh Achmat Behardien would not allow anybody to discuss politics.<sup>12</sup>

Booley's reply was a faithful presentation of the MJC. It was not an underclass strategy of momentary deception (or even self-deception) for medium term gain. The memorandum by Booley and Du Toit significantly pleaded for a Common Voters roll, and part of their evidence was a lengthy extract from Du Plessis' "The Cape Malays". Du Plessis' advice to the State in this book was that

A policy of force may be imperative as a temporary measure in certain circumstances. It can never be the ultimate solution ...<sup>13</sup>

Booley and Du Toit's response at the Commission was that force for the removal of the Common Voters' Role may be necessary for the good of the State:

But if that step is taken it will destroy the faith of the Malays in the integrity of the White races of South Africa and lead ultimately to the creation in the Malay Community of a hatred alien to its character.<sup>14</sup> (emphasis added)

What emerges is not only Du Plessis' tempered fascism but the successful interpellation of the MJC as representative of a "Malay" subject. Furthermore, hegemonic ideology is re-presented in Booley's discourse: as subordinates the "malays" still have faith in the good white people above them, as they ought to have. But Booley and Du Toit do not

totally acquiesce - they threaten as well. And the "hatred" they warned of which was so "alien" to the "malays'" character emerges later in 1954 and seems "alien" more to Du Plessis and the ruling-class than to the so-called "malays". The MJC then stood in an ambivalent "malay" subject-position and eschewed formal politics because that meant breaking with authority and the ruling-class actors senior MJC members benefited from. The peculiar role the MJC had to play stems from the fact that if the clerisy hoped to continue wielding some influence the political issues had to be addressed. They depended on a grassroot base which could be mobilized by explicitly political organizations at a conjuncture of heightened political struggle - as, indeed, the 1950s' was. In such shifting sands of religion and politics the MJC articulated itself - very often in contradictory terms.

With an ambivalent clerisy and an undeterred Cape Malay Choir Board Du Plessis sought to gain underclass support for the approaching Van Riebeeck Festival planned for 1952. The Van Riebeeck Festival was planned to celebrate the 300 years since Jan Van Riebeeck settled at the Cape. It was to be an essentially Cape Town affair unlike the countrywide centenary celebrations of the Voortrekker movement in 1938. The importance of the Festival in perpetuating Afrikaner mythology is reflected in the fact that in 1945 already the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (FAK)<sup>15</sup> established an autonomous Committee to plan the Festival for 1952. Du Plessis was made the Chairman of the "non-European Committee" and his tasks included recruiting "malays", "coloureds" and "griquas" to participate in the Festival.

Du Plessis presumed the participation of the malay choirs in the festival and then he organised for "malay", "griqua" and "coloured" pageants to parade their separate cultural expressions in terms of the dominant conception of history and society. By the middle of 1951 it was revealed that the government was to donate 150.000 pounds<sup>16</sup> towards the Festival, and in December the festival committee announced that it would support financially "coloured" organizations intending to participate in the Festival.<sup>17</sup> By the end of 1951, too, the Unity Movement and the Anti-CAD started a campaign to boycott the Festival. Mass meetings were organised throughout the Cape Peninsula and by New Year the contradictions in the Choir Board surfaced. Some choirs rejected participation in the Festival. These dissenting Choirs withdrew from the Choir Board and only a few choirs participated in the festival, and even then not as full choirs. Attendance at the concerts, at the Van Riebeeck Stadium - especially constructed for the Festival - were the lowest in the Choir Board's history. But even the Choir Board was manipulated into participating in the festival. Block-booking of all venues by the Festival Committee forced the Choir Board to slot-in with the Festival programme. The Celtics, Shamrocks and Boarding Boys and seven other choirs withdrew from the CMCB and subsequently formed the S.A. Sing Koorraad.<sup>18</sup> Before this new "Choir Council" was established Choir members joined activists such as Hosea Jaffee, I.B.Tabata, Ali Fataar and Dr Gool of the Unity Movement in rallying the Cape Town underclasses to boycott the Festival. And the working-class responded well even though it meant missing a favourite "team". At a meeting in the Fidelity

Hall in March 1952 the meeting resolved:

We, residents of Cape Town and representatives of Malay Choirs, resolve to carry out the boycott of the Herrenvolk van Riebeeck Festival of Hate now being conducted ... <sup>19</sup>

The result of this and similar meetings cumulatively broke Du Plessis and the CAD's attempts to generate underclass support. Echoing the BBC, the Cape Argus described the situation at one Festival concert

There was a notable absence of Coloured people in the festival crowd. <sup>20</sup>

And such was the situation for the entire festival. Not only were the concerts boycotted, the "malay" pageantry was also boycotted. So can a "Shaykh Yusuf", standing by a model of the Voetboeg, be seen in a post-festival brochure, but with an empty stadium in the background and all other pictures of "non-white" pageants have a similar empty background compared to the Voortrekker float, for instance, with an excited crowd in the background. <sup>21</sup> But the pageants were themselves distortions of historical fact, which popular organizations contested; and they used the very figures Du Plessis used for different ideological purposes. Thus The Torch wrote in February 1952

What a disgrace that some of the descendants of Sheikh Yusuf, a great figure against this very Van Riebeeck and the Dutch conquerors of his motherland, should be singing the praise and honour of the very scoundrels who persecuted Sheikh Yusuf and hounded him to his death. Are they singing for love of their persecutors? <sup>22</sup>

The opposition to the Van Riebeeck Festival burst open the veneer of acceptance of Du Plessis and the CAD. In the Choir Board, "politics" could now not be skirted but the political nature of opposition to the Festival was obscured

by Du Plessis. He blamed the failure of the Festival on "a small clique of disgruntled teachers"<sup>23</sup> Then, in an attempt to secure the affiliation of Choirs to the CMCB, Du Plessis invited Choir representatives to the CAD offices in September 1952. The Choir Board circular read:<sup>24</sup>

Dear Sir

I hereby wish to inform you that your Captain and Delegates are hereby requested to attend a Special General Meeting to be held in the Coloured Affairs Department's Conference Room on 9th September 1952 at 7.45pm. Hoping that you will instruct your representatives to attend, as our Life President, Dr I.D.Du Plessis, are to present a personal presentation to each Captain ...

Mr M.A. January  
(Secretary of the CMCB)

After the Van Riebeeck Festival Du Plessis' role as a ruling-class actor became clearer and even those who were deluded by him were forced to change their perspective. An organization that was less vociferous during the anti-Festival campaign was The Moslem Teachers' Association (est. 1951). The MTA was constituted almost exclusively by Muslim teachers from the dozen Muslim mission primary schools. Because of TLSA dominance in the peninsula and having only a base in few primary schools the MTA acted with reserve in the anti-Festival campaigning. Its campaign was limited to instructing congregations, through the Imams, that the Festival should be boycotted.<sup>25</sup> By nature a constrained organisation the MTA never articulated itself politically. However, it spurned a "malay" identity and included "malays" and Indians in the organization. It was in the educational sphere that "malay" - Indian difference had decidedly

decreased by 1940 as a recent study noted:

Ethnic consideration in terms of indigenous Muslim and immigrants were becoming increasingly irrelevant as both communities went in search of schools willing to accept their children.<sup>26</sup>

And being teachers at these schools the MTA was determined to guard the unity. The MTA members were the leading force in the opposition to Du Plessis and Luckhoff's book "The Malay Quarter and its People". The resolution of the protest meeting held early in 1954 read:

The book propagates Islam as a Malay religion whereas Islam is a universal religion and has only one law for all Muslims throughout the world.<sup>27</sup>

The book was published late in 1953 as the first in the "race relations" series of the Coloured Affairs Department, and Du Plessis dedicated the book to

a people who through their industry, simplicity and sincerity, their respect for the law, for their own traditions and those of their neighbours, have shown the way to racial harmony: The Cape Malays.<sup>28</sup>

But the response from below and further developments in the 1950s' placed a serious question mark over "their respect for the law". Throughout Du Plessis' literary productions the quaintness and conservatism of the "malays" are reiterated and such descriptions serve more to constitute a "malay" subject than descriptions of any reality. But if Du Plessis' discourse in other publications were "unscientific" and historical-descriptive, in this book a marked change can be discerned. Apart from the unusually thick wad of colour and monochrome photographs the book has a chapter reflecting a marked shift from early writings. Chapter four deals with "Modern Western Society and Mechanisation: Its impact in the Malay Social System".<sup>29</sup> It was especially

for the psuedo-scientific analyses and conclusions in that chapter that Du Plessis was attacked. The chapter consists of a regurgitation of sections of a Masters thesis in Social Science written on "The Coloured Women in Industry and at Home".<sup>30</sup> The writer, A.G.Weiss was a personnel manageress at a large Ackermans clothing factory in Cape Town. Devoted to exploring improved conditions of production at the factory the writer concludes that it is "Islamic law" and the "malay way of life" which hinders "malay" women from performing as productively as the "coloured" women. However, the "malay" women are more morally conscious than the "coloured" women, whereas the "malay" men unashamedly use the "coloured" women. In subtler terms, and with anecdotes, Du Plessis and Luckhoff repeat the Weiss thesis. The rest of the book is Du Plessis' usual colourful description of festivals, rituals and songs. It certainly sold very poorly in Cape Town and it was sent overseas for distribution by South African embassies. Die Huisgenoot gave Du Plessis the usual praise and commended especially its contribution to "race relations".<sup>31</sup> Die Huisgenoot was not alone in praising the book. The English Times Literary Supplement also reviewed the book favourably:

In their highly readable and attractively produced book ... Dr du Plessis and Dr Luckhoff reveal the deep affection and respect in which white South Africa holds the Malay Community.<sup>32</sup>

But in Cape Town the popular response to the book was that of indignation. Not only the book, but the authors and the bureaucracy they served became the focal points for protest. On the 11th April 1954 the Azzavia Study Group organised a mass meeting at the Azzavia Mosque in Walmer Estate. Before

a crowd of 2000 a member of the Moslem Teachers' Association presented a lengthy review of the book. Most of the crowd were never attracted to purchase and read Du Plessis' works and the few who had some idea of Du Plessis' creative ability were now being educated in politics and literature. In Du Plessis' autobiography a sense of the political nature of the protest can be glimpsed. He writes that after the publication of the book,

het 'n studiegroep van die Kaapse Maleiers teen sekere feite in verband met die godsdienst beswaar gemaak: 'n protes wat nie van 'n mate van politieke inmenging vry te spreek was nie.<sup>33</sup>

The Torch summed-up events of the past two years since 1952 in its lengthy coverage of the meeting and the book. It said,

(Du Plessis) got a smack in the face from Moslem and Christian Coloureds at the time of the Van Riebeeck Celebrations. The Malay choirs have given him several knocks since then. And now comes the slap from people who, on the whole, are not known to have very progressive political ideas.<sup>34</sup>

The Torch was quite correct in its assertion that there was a dearth of "very progressive political ideas" even in the Moslem Teachers' Association and Azzavia Study Group.

Whereas the Unity Movement and The Torch could observe the course of events and comment, by the mid-1950s' they were incapable of intervening at the historic conjuncture.

Neville Alexander has observed that,

after 1952 approximately the Anti-CAD and the NEUM did not participate in any mass struggles of the working-class.<sup>35</sup>

And where and when the Unity Movement wanted to mobilize

politically conservative constituencies its strategies were ineffective. The problem was not that there was an inherent backwardness in any constituencies. An eloquent Ali Fataar or Goolam Gool - who came from such constituencies - had less success than the oratory, in local patios with popular symbolism, at Friday communal worship (Jumuah) or at mass meetings. But the problem was more than an inability to cast oratory in popular symbolism. Unity Movement and Muslim intellectuals were not moulded in what Gramsci has called the "mode of being of the new intellectual."<sup>36</sup> A mode of being that,

no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, "permanent persuader", and not just a simple orator...

Though the Muslim intellectuals that emerged in the 1950s' had more success than the Unity Movement they could not break the hold of the conservative clerisy in the MJC. These Muslim intellectuals - such as Abubakr Fakier, Mogamat Ajam, and Gasant Arnold - were to a large extent products of Unity Movement ideological persuasion.<sup>37</sup> Their insertion in a Muslim constituency as Muslims came at about the same time that anti-colonial and Pan-Islamic movements were vigorously articulating their causes in the Middle East. Communication via print and pilgrimage and the cassette, to a lesser extent at the time, were rudimentary ways of imagining the universal community of Muslims struggling for the materialisation of Divine patterns in space and time.<sup>38</sup> And thus the literature of a Sayyid Qutb - Egyptian activist killed in 1966 - or Abul ala Maududi - an Indian/Pakistani activist<sup>39</sup> can be found reprinted in local cyclostylized magazines

such as the "Islamic Mirrior" published by the Claremont Muslim Youth Association (est.1958). The discourses of the early youth movements were Islamic and popular-democratic. Differences were thus naturally constructed but religious chauvinism cannot be discerned from a reading of the literature. Thus in September 1961 a mass meeting against the Dutch Reformed church's attack on Islam resolved:

We see in this attack on Islam a deliberate attempt to drive a wedge between us and other non-Islamic groups with whom we have hitherto lived in peace, harmony and friendliness.<sup>40</sup>

The Muslim youth associations were, however, limited. The African National Congress and the South African Coloured Peoples' Congress were both incapable of successfully mobilizing in the Western Cape. The Unity Movement and its affiliates remained a progressive political base for the young petty bourgeoisie. Alexander has observed that the politics of the NEUM "was a petty bourgeois politics" and that

Most of its activists in the urban and rural areas were teachers i.e. civil servants; many were preachers, some were lawyers, doctors, students and so forth.<sup>41</sup>

If such was the composition of the Unity Movement then the Muslim youth associations were similarly composed, and with the odd worker and artisan. The Claremont Muslim Youth Association, for instance, had Imam Abdullah Haron - a salesman for Rowntrees Sweets - as leader with a core of between 30 to 40 members. And many of these members - such of Abubakr Fakier, Sedick Galant and Ismail Saban - were teachers. But they limited themselves as the Claremont MYA

to Claremont or as a Cape Muslim Youth Movement (est. 1957) to District Six. There were moments when they spread further but they remained essentially local. The utility of such a strategy was that the association would remain organic to the locality. But the age (20 - 35 years) and education of members prevented fuller social intercourse with their constituences. Thus by 1963 the CMYA had not yet accumulated 200 members.<sup>42</sup> But the problem of numbers was not a severe impediment (small numbers may even have been a novel attempt at "vanguardism", and the CMYM is purported to have had 500 members in District Six at one stage.) The problems in the beginning of the 1960s' were presented by an increasingly repressive Apartheid State. Opposition was still expressed but the space for concrete organization was narrowing (especially after Sharpeville). But on the 7th May 1961 the youth associations, now with the Muslim Judicial Council and other organizations held a mass rally in the Drill Hall, Cape Town. To the theme "Islam and Fundamental Human Rights" was the crowd of 4000 addressed. The Chairman's opening statement is indicative of the Islamic and popular-democratic discourse the youth associations' articulated. The Chairman said that the meeting was called,

Firstly, to show how completely incompatible every single step the ruling-class has taken, is with the fundamental principles of Islam, and therefore humanity, and secondly, to make our stand - Islamic point of view based on the Holy Quran, Sunnah and Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad - clear to all in the country in particular and the world at large, as to where we stand in our struggle against oppression and exploitation and the struggle for complete freedom for everybody in this country, irrespective of race, colour or creed.<sup>43</sup>

The youth associations were not inconsequential in the process of disarticulating the malay subject. They represented the qualitative organizational shift from the relatively unorganized early 1950s'.

On almost another track Du Plessis was finishing his tasks as Commissioner in 1962. He moved on to become Chancellor of the coloured University College in Bellville - now the University of the Western Cape. With population relocations and the development of peri-urban settlement in the Western Cape the Choirs and Coons found themselves in new conditions on the Cape Flats. In the politically quiescent but also socially disruptive 1960s' (as the State engineered group area and working-class housing), the Choirs and Coons continued as a working-class cultural form. But Du Plessis' project to re-construct and fix malay ethnicity became less ambitious. This was not because of any realization on his part of the futility of such a project. Rather, the demographic changes in the Western Cape changed the imagery and landscape of the area allowing for scant space to imagine the quaint malays, "that semi-Eastern colony", with their invariant ways. But the more significant development were the organizational structures disarticulating the malay subject. In his autobiography Du Plessis can only reminisce about the old days when Abatti, the Dantu family and Rasdien were still around - the "verteenwoordiges van 'n rustiger tyd".<sup>44</sup> The "more peaceful times" were being replaced by ruptures in society, and Du Plessis' Choirs were being discredited like never before. At mosques and especially amongst young students were the analyses of the role of Choirs and Coons by "Intellectuals among the Muslims"

circulated. The Cape Muslim Youth Movement held a public discussion in December 1960 on the role of Choirs and Coons. According to the Muslim News the conclusion of the public discussion, were amongst others, that the Choir's and Coons were;<sup>45</sup>

- "1. Social safety valve for ordinary people to forget their humiliations.
2. Tourist attractions, financial interests ...
6. Serious drain on economy of underpaid ...
8. Builds division as a special Malay section (Cape Malay Choir) and often associated with the Islamic religion"

The response in 1961 to the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul-Rahman, when he invited the "malays" "back" to Malaysia is indicative of the new discourse. The response to this most audacious hailing of "the malays" was:

The people labelled the "Malays" in South Africa have over a period of three centuries of isolation developed a distinct character strictly South African. They are Muslims who do not speak the language of Malaya nor do they speak arabic. They are not "racially" pure and have become thoroughly assimilated with other South Africanisms. Their life and future is inextricably tied up with the rest of the non-Whites because they have suffered the same humiliation and oppression. Attempts have been made to boost them as a peculiar, colourful, tuneful, little group with their own location in Schotsche Kloof and their own stooge on that colossal mockery of democracy, the Union Council of Coloured Affairs.

It would be unthinkable for the vast majority of Muslims in the country who are more South African than Dr. Verwoerd to uproot themselves and repair to the friendly political climes of Malaya.

It is because South Africa is their home and they have contributed to the industrial giant which she is today that the Muslims should not leave here just because all is not hunky-dory.

Let the Tunku realise that asking Muslims to come to Malaya will not prevent future Sharpvilles and Langas nor will it hasten the inevitable birth of a South African democratic society.<sup>46</sup>

It has been shown that the incipient Islamic movement in the Western Cape disarticulated the malay subject and reconstituted the Muslim subject. A Muslim subject-position was not constituted anew - it has had long currency in the Western Cape - but the articulation of that subject occurred in a revised political discourse reflecting changes in South African society and the world at large. But there can be no historical closure, as can be found in a Du Plessis short-story for instance, where a story is neatly rounded-off. Political and social struggle continually contest the constitution of subjects (as "Muslims", "workers", "malays", "people", and so on). Subjectivity is displaced across a range of discourses and a subject is the site of contradictions, moreso when the material contradictions in society surface. Thus, the Muslim subject-position was also challenged. But a malay subject was certainly effectively being disarticulated.

#### Footnotes

1. The Torch, 4/3/52
2. C. Belsey, Critical Practice, p.65
3. See The Torch, 10/5/61 and Muslim News, 12/5/61

4. Ethnic subjects were being articulated in State discourse and practice. Against this was articulated the popular-democratic discourse. Hegemonic struggle consists of this struggle to constitute subjects.
5. The Congress Alliance consisted of the African National Congress, the Congress of Democrats, the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses and the South African Congress of Trade Unions
6. For example see The Torch 4/3/52.
7. I.D. Du Plessis and C.A. Luckhoff, The Malay Quarter and the People.
8. The Sun 3/3/39
9. See A. Davids, "From Complacency to Activism", unpublished paper, pp 15-22
10. For the Founding Resolutions of the MJC see Davids, op cit, p.17
11. The Sun, 8/5/36
12. UG 20/1954, Report of the Commission ... into... the Separate Representation of Voters Act ..., p.271; para. 6272
13. I.D. Du Plessis, The Cape Malays, p.85
14. UG 21/1954, Report of the Commission .. into the Separate Representation of Voters Act ..., p.75
15. Donges Collection, CA A 1646/83
16. The Torch 29/5/51
17. The Torch 18/12/51
18. See A. Davids, op, cit, p.14
19. The Torch, 11/3/52
20. Cape Argus, 15/3/52
21. See "Festival in Pictures" photo album published by the Cape Times, 1952
22. The Torch, 5/2/52
23. UG 45/1952, First report of the Commissioner, p.20
24. The invitation was reprinted in The Torch 23/9/52
25. Oral evidence from Mr Ali, a Chairman of the MTA, 7/1/87
26. M. Ajam, "The raison D'etre of the Muslim Mission Primary School in Cape Town and Environs from 1860 to

1980 ...", unpublished Ph.D., p.275

27. Cape Times, 21/4/54
28. Du Plessis and Luckhoff, op cit, no pagination.
29. Du Plessis and Luckhoff, pp
30. A.G. Weiss, "The Coloured Woman in Industry and at Home", M.A. Thesis in Social Science, UCT, 1950
31. Die Huisgenoot, 30/7/54
32. Times Literary Supplement, 16/7/54
33. I.D.Du Plessis, Aantekeninge Uit Tuynstraat, p.57
34. The Torch, 27/4/54
35. N.Alexander, Aspects of Non-Collaboration in the Western Cape in Social Dynamics, 12(1), p.12
36. Quoted in C.Boggs, Gramsci's Marxism, p.76
37. See M.Haron, "Imam Abdullah Haron - Life, Ideas and Impact", M.A. thesis, UCT, 1986, pp 167-172
38. See B.Anderson, Imagined Communities, especially p.55, as to how communities are "imagined", even the "Muslim Community (Ummah)" and the role of newspapers, literature and pilgrimage in particular, in shaping a conception of similarity and community.
39. For some detail on Islamic political thought and activism see H.Enayat, "Modern Islamic Political Thought" and his article on "The Islamic Resurgence" in "HISTORY TODAY", vol 30, February 1980.
40. Muslim News, 29/9/61
41. Alexander, op cit, p.11
42. See M.Haron, op cit, p.170
43. Muslim News, 21/5/61
44. Du Plessis, op cit, p.6
45. Muslim News 30/12/60. See also the "confession" - "I was a Coon" - in Muslim News, 6/04/62
46. "The Malayan Invitation" by Fakhry in Islamic Mirror, March 1961 and see Muslim News, 27/01/61.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the practices by which a ruling-class actor attempted to constitute a malay subject. Although having a presence in Cape Town it was especially petty bourgeois actors, such as those in the Cape Malay Association, which articulated a malay subject. About the same time as that organisation reached the nadir of its decline, Du Plessis established the Cape Malay Choir Board. Drawing on a heritage of underclass cultural expression Du Plessis transformed this organisation into a fixed emblem of what is "malay". But the attempt to completely strip this cultural form of any semblance of "politics" failed as was seen in the 1952 Van Riebeeck Festival when ten choirs left the Choir Board. Co-operation between political organisations and choir leaders briefly occurred during the anti-festival campaign. The conditions of political struggle in Cape Town, however, made the Choir dissension of 1952 a momentary issue. The Popular organisations were unable to articulate, on a long term basis, with cultural elements among the underclasses; underclass cultural expression was frowned upon by the petty bourgeois leadership of organisations such as the Non-European Unity Movement.

But the Choir Board was not Du Plessis' only concern. He worked towards the establishment of an "Institute for Malay Studies" at the University of Cape Town. The institutionalisation of a "discipline" dealing with Malays would have served as a further validation of a malay subject. The least it would have achieved would have been to legitimize a malay subject - as yet another ethnic subject - in ruling-

class discourse. Though an "Institute" was never really established, the Orientalist discourse that characterized the correspondence between Du Plessis, the Coloured Advisory Council and the University is indicative of the widespread currency, and absorption into South Africa, of Anglo-American discourse about "the other". The pseudo-scientific discourse was, however, not Du Plessis' choice. He emerged from a Romantic intellectual context which was conducive to "imagining" and "capturing" "the other". And, in Du Plessis' case it was what led him to observe and attempt to "preserve" the "malays". His recommendations for "malay group areas" was a concrete move to entrench the malay subject-position and define for it a territorial presence.

The argument posits Du Plessis as a subject constituted in ruling-class and Romantic discourses. As a subject constituted in particular hegemonic discourses Du Plessis attempts to reconstitute a malay ethnic subject. But Du Plessis' struggle to constitute a unified subject is challenged from below by struggles to articulate Muslim and popular-democratic subject-positions.

The beginnings of the articulation of Islamic and popular - democratic discourses can be seen in the rejection of Du Plessis' "malay group areas" scheme. His attempts to stage "the malays" at the Van Riebeeck Festival was, with few exceptions, rejected. And his publication with Dr Luckhoff "The Malay Quarter and its People" met with little popular legitimacy. For almost ten years - c.1939 to 1950 - Du Plessis and his articulation of the malay subject went

unchallenged. The Muslim Judicial Council stood in an ambivalent position towards a malay subject-position and was always contradictorily constituted by a range of discourses: Malay, Muslim, South African, people. However, the disarticulation of the malay-subject was undertaken by young intellectuals emerging from the Popular organisations and interpellated by Islamic discourse. From the early 1950s' a qualitative organisational shift accompanies this and gives form to the disarticulation of the malay subject. The ineffective Moslem Teachers' Association (est. 1951) is succeeded by the Cape Muslim Youth Movement (est. 1957, in District Six) and the Claremont Muslim Youth Association (est. 1958 in Claremont) and their disarticulation of the malay subject is accompanied by the articulation of a Muslim and popular-democratic subject-position. Their class, generation and form of organisation constrained them from deeper social and political action and analysis. However, by the early 1960s', when they were at their most active the Apartheid state was becoming increasingly repressive. By 1969 the full weight of Apartheid repression had fallen on Imam Abdullah Haron (when he died in detention), founder of the Claremont Muslim Youth Association and Muslim leader. Meanwhile, Du Plessis continued to parade the Choirs but the construction of the malay subject was long subverted.

## NOTES ON SOURCES

Du Plessis' prose, and, to a lesser extent, his poetry were useful guides to unravel his perceptions. It is unfortunate that his personal papers were located very late in 1986. Further research will definitely mean a trip to Bloemfontein where his papers are presently held. The reports of the Coloured Affairs Department and other official sources provided official views of events and policies. Newspaper reports were also a source. The "alternative" press - such as The Torch and Muslim News - provided material on perceptions by those affected by State policies as well as being a source for popular social history. Oral sources abound but the few people interviewed provided useful personal reminiscences and insights into the experience and texture of social relations in Cape Town. Theoretical and comparative literature on "race", language, culture and control opened up areas of investigation that have been neglected. Recent unpublished theses on Cape Town social history and the Muslims eased the task of collecting primary data.



APPENDIX I

I.D. Du Plessis and P.W. Botha (Deputy Minister of Coloured Affairs) in front of a Mosque in the Bo-Kaap with some Muslim friends. c. 1955

## APPENDIX II

97 An example of the dominant conception of history as it was exemplified in the Van Riebeeck Festival. Note the linkages between Social Darwinist ideology, the liberal UCT and an Afrikaner festival.

Extract from "The Festival in Pictures."

## APPENDIX III

98 The 'Malay Pageants' at the Van Riebeeck Festival.

Extract from "The Festival of Pictures."

## APPENDIX I

96 I.D. Du Plessis and P.W. Botha (Deputy Minister of Coloured Affairs) in front of a Mosque in the Bo-Kaap with some Muslim friends. c. 1955



ABOVE: DARKEST AFRICA: The first float symbolized the "primitive shackling of the human soul," the masked figures representing the people of Darkest Africa drawn together and subjected to the central figure. Presented by the Speech Training and Drama Department, University of Cape Town.

Bo: *DONKER AFRIKA: Die eerste sierwa het die „primitiewe gebondenheid van die siel van die mens” gesimboliseer. Die gemaskerde persone verteenwoordig die inboorlinge van Donker Afrika, gesamenlik onderworpe aan die sentrale figuur. Aangebied deur die Spraak- en Toneelopleidingsdepartement van die Universiteit van Kaapstad.*

## APPENDIX II

An example of the dominant conception of history as it was exemplified in the Van Riebeeck Festival. Note the linkages between Social Darwinist ideology, the liberal UCT and an Afrikaner festival.

Extract from "The Festival in Pictures."

Cape Malays and Griqua communities staged events in their histories in the Stadium pageant on Wednesday, April 2.

# MALAY and GRIQUA PAGEANTS

Die Kaapse Maleiers en die Griekwa het op Woensdag, 2 April, in 'n spesiale Stadium-optog 'n voorstelling van gebeurtenisse uit hulle geskiedenis aangebied.

## KAAPSE MALEIER- en GRIEKWA-OPTOGTE



**SIJKH JOSEPH ARRIVES:** Sheikh Joseph arriving on Java in 1694 with his two wives, friends and servants. Scene in the Cape Malay pageant.

**DIE AANKOMS VAN SJEIK JOSEF:** Sjeik Josef se aankoms van Java in 1694 met sy twee vroue, vriende en bediendes. 'n Toneel in die Kaapse Maleier-optog.



**BATTLE OF BLAAUWBERG:** Float showing Malay troops who took part in the Battle of Blaauwberg, 1806, when Lt.-Gen. Sir David Baird landed with 6,700 British troops.

**GEVEG VAN BLAAUWBERG:** 'n Sierwa wat Maleier-troepe wat aan die geveg van Blaauwberg deelgeneem het, voorstel. Lt.-genl. Sir David Baird het met 'n troepemag van 6,700 man geland.

### APPENDIX III

The 'Malay Pageants' at the Van Riebeeck Festival.

Extract from "The Festival of Pictures."

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